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Smart Computing® & CONSUMER ELECTRONICS In Plain English

smartcomputing.com

June 2012
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Find And Manage Duplicate Photos

Finding Duplicate Files Is As Easy As 1, 2, 3!

You may be surprised the first time you run a duplicate photo scan on your computer. The average computer may have hundreds, even thousands, of duplicate images. There are many reasons this occurs.

For example, each time you transfer new photos over from your digital camera to your computer, duplicate photos from a previous transfer session may already be saved on that same computer in a different folder.

Duplicate photos on your computer wastes space, creates a longer backup process, and becomes time consuming when you go to look for a particular file. Easy Duplicate Finder will perform a thorough scan enabling you to find and manage duplicate photos. Periodic usage of Easy Duplicate Finder will keep your computer organized and if you currently pay for a backup service, may even save you money! Plus – Easy Duplicate Finder locates many other types of duplicate files, as shown in the list to the right.

Features include:

- Duplicate Photo Finder
- Duplicate Song Finder
- Duplicate Outlook Email Finder
- Duplicate Documents Finder
- Automated Scanning Wizard
- Comprehensive Reports
- Easy to Use Interface
- Duplicate Selection Manager

Easy Duplicate Finder works with:

Windows xp Windows Vista 7

easyDuplicateFinder™

www.easyduplicatefinder.com/smartcomputing

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Smart Computing & CONSUMER ELECTRONICS In Plain English
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Office Technology

44 Tablets

Powerful and portable, tablets require as much (and maybe more) care as notebooks and desktops. Learn how to care for your new device.

54 Laser Printers

Laser printers are heavy-duty machines that boast large paper capacities and long toner life. Even so, laser printers will last longer with proper maintenance.

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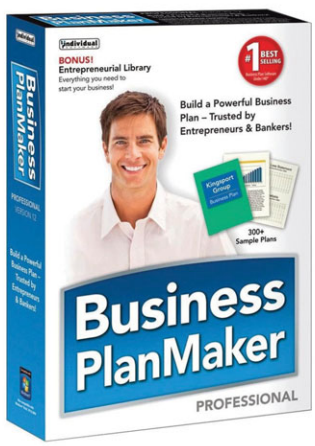

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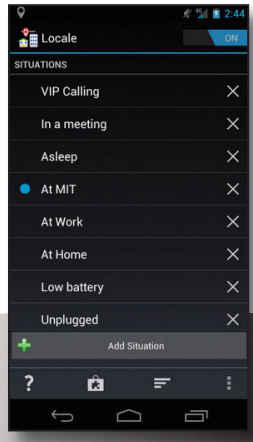

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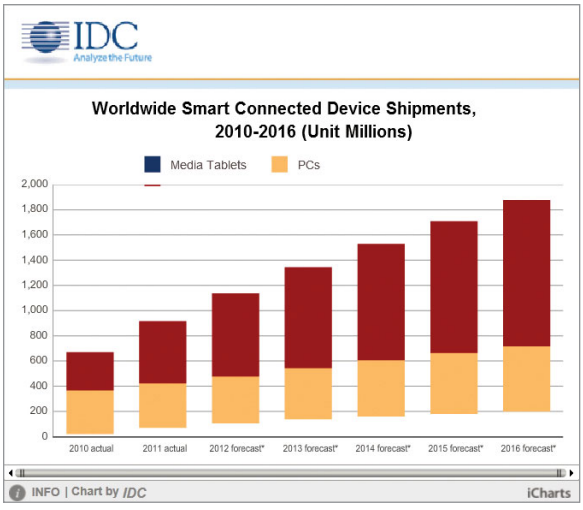
Technology News



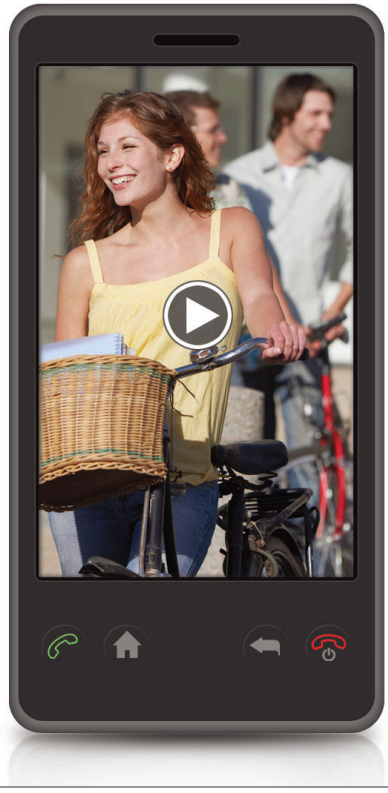
More smart, Internet-connected devices are expected to be produced in the future.

THE RISE OF SMART DEVICES

According to a study from the IDC (International Data Corporation; www.idc.com), nearly 1 billion smart connected devices (916 million units) were shipped in 2011. IDC defines smart connected devices as PCs, media tablets, and smartphones. The study found that many people own and regularly use multiple smart connected devices, and the IDC believes that the number of people who use multiple smart devices will continue to increase. The study forecasts that smart connected devices will top 1.1 billion shipments in 2012, and by 2016, the IDC expects shipments to reach 1.84 billion, which is a compound annual growth rate of 15.4% over the five-year period.

MOBILE PHONES NOW PRIMARY VIDEO CAPTURE DEVICES

Mobile phones bypassed both digital camcorders and digital cameras as the most commonly used devices for recording video, according to a new survey from InfoTrends. In 2010, the digital camera was the most popular device for capturing video with around 40% of users saying that they had used a digital camera the most often to shoot video. In 2011, smartphones and camera phones slightly edged out digital cameras, which was in part due to an improvement in mobile device recording capabilities and the fact that consumers carry their mobile phones with them at all times.



Smartphones and camera phones are now the most often used devices for video capture.

THE REPORT

Adobe analyzed 1.7 billion visits to 225 U.S. companies' websites

SOCIAL MEDIA PRESENCE IS UNDERVALUED

Adobe's new Digital Index report found that marketers are underestimating the amount of website traffic that can be generated by social media. For the report, Adobe analyzed 1.7 billion visits to 225 U.S. companies' websites. One of the key findings was the first-click attribution (a method of monitoring what drove the consumer's initial visit, rather than checking the website where a consumer clicked before the visit) increased the impact of social media by as much as 94%. The traditional last-click attribution undervalues the marketing potential of social media because it doesn't take into account how social websites engage customers during the buying process.

SMB MARKETING STUDY

In InfoTrend's study, "Capturing the SMB Marketing Automation Opportunity," it found that SMBs are diversifying marketing resources. Just a few of the possible channels include mass media, promotional print, online coverage, mobile sites, and social media. The report indicates that SMBs are limited by budget, time, and expertise, so SMBs are turning to service providers and Web-based software to manage the media exposure. The study also found that SMBs went to one place to address marketing. As such, service providers should focus on things such as ease-of-use, affordability, an all-channel approach, and a measurement of communication success when creating SMB marketing opportunities.

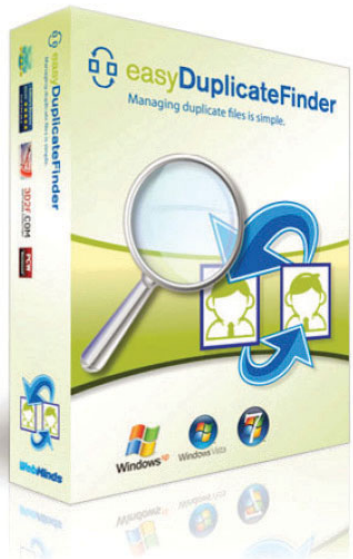
Tablet shipments are on the rise, according to a recent survey.

TABLET PC MARKET GROWS

NPD DisplaySearch estimates that the shipment of tablet PCs will increase from 72.7 million units in 2011 to 383.3 million in 2017. The main source of growth for tablets will be emerging markets, which are expected to account for 46% of worldwide shipments in 2017—up from a 36% share in 2011. Another key factor is the evolution of tablets with higher pixel densities, better performance, and improved multimedia capabilities. In the United States, 39% of tablet owners say that having a Windows operating system option for the next tablet was either important or very important.

ANNOUNCEMENT

WebMinds in now offering Easy Duplicate Finder for Mac users.



EASY DUPLICATE FINDER NOW AVAILABLE FOR MAC

WebMinds announced that it's offering a Mac version of Easy Duplicate Finder ($29.95 for one computer; www.easyduplicatefinder.com), which is a program that scans your PC for duplicate files to help you save space and reduce the size and time of backups. The functionality of the Mac version will be the same as the Windows version; the only difference is that the Easy Duplicate Finder interface has been redesigned to match the look and feel of Mac programs.

Business News

Go Do! is like a technical manual that teaches you how to program your start-up to succeed.

"GO DO!: FOR PEOPLE WHO HAVE ALWAYS WANTED TO START A BUSINESS"

As the subtitle suggests, successful entrepreneur Jeremy Harbour's book Go Do! is written for those who're thinking of starting their own business but don't know where to begin. Go Do! keeps start-up starters on the right path with encouragement and inspiration. It aims to help readers overcome challenges and barriers by breaking them up into smaller and more manageable tasks. But according to Jeremy Harbour, experience is the best teacher, so if you're serious about starting your own business, get the book and go, do!

INDIE BALLARD

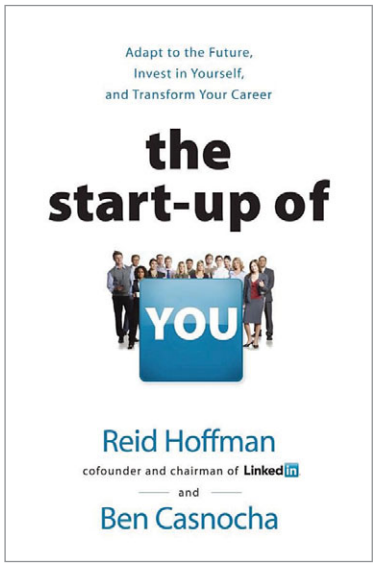
Indie Ballard (www.indieballard.com), based in Seattle, Wash., is a coworking and shared office space location that caters to small start-ups, independent Web developers and designers, and anyone else who wants to get out of the home office and into a real office. Located at 20th Ave NW, Indie Ballard offers desk space for individuals and groups on a month-to-month basis, starting at $225 per month for two to three days a week in a community desk area and $350 per month for full-time and a dedicated desk. Amenities include two shared conference rooms for private meetings and phone calls, fast Internet, 24/7 access, kitchen basics, an espresso maker, print/copy/scan services, a projector, indoor bike parking, and showering facilities.

WWW.INDIEBALLARD.COM

A coworking and shared office space location that caters to small start-ups.

ENERSPACE CHICAGO

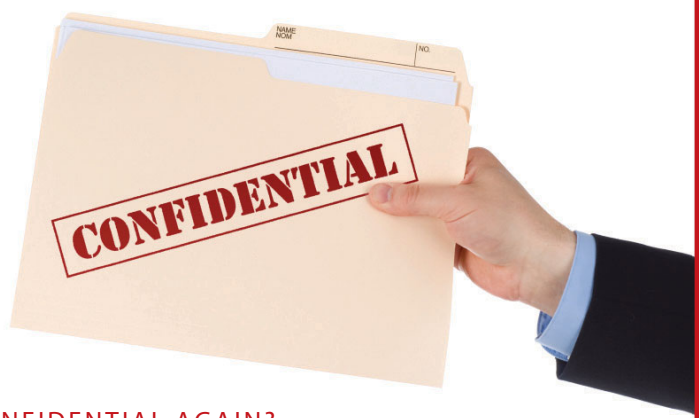
Enerspace (www.enerspacechicago.com) is the place to be for entrepreneurs in Chicago. This coworking space is located in the heart of the city with convenient access to all of the trappings of an urban lifestyle and an impressive view of the downtown Chicago skyline. Enerspace supports small business owners, digital start-ups, freelance designers and writers, and more. Membership rates start at $175 per month for part-time and $425 per month for a dedicated desk. Members get access to a fitness space for afternoon training sessions, showers, high-speed Wi-Fi, faxing, a break room with kitchen, 24/7 secure access, receptionist service, and package and mail receiving.



The Start-Up Of You is for people looking to start their own business, employees trying to move ahead in their current career, and those looking for new areas of opportunity.

"THE START-UP OF YOU: ADAPT TO THE FUTURE, INVEST IN YOURSELF, AND TRANSFORM YOUR CAREER"

In this book, LinkedIn cofounder and chairman Reid Hoffman and author Ben Casnocha deliver successful strategies for shifting your career into overdrive in the face of this new climate of global competition, diminished job security, and high unemployment. This book teaches you how to adapt your career plans, develop a competitive advantage, strengthen your professional network, find the unique breakout opportunities, take proactive risks, and tap your network for information and intelligence.



WHAT'S CONFIDENTIAL AGAIN?

A Harris Interactive report commissioned by FileTrek reports that even though 79% of adults say that removing confidential documents from the workplace is grounds for termination, 90% of them suspect that employees do it anyway. Just 40% said it was never acceptable to remove confidential material from the workplace.

SMALL BUSINESS EVENTS

Small business events give you a chance to learn critical management skills and network with professionals in related fields. Don't miss these upcoming opportunities. If you would like to see your event here, email editor@smartcomputing.com with the subject Small Business Event.

Kentucky Innovation and Entrepreneurship Conference
Louisville, Ky. | June 1, 2012
ksef.kstc.com

140 Characters Conference
New York City, N.Y. | June 15-16
nyc.140conf.com

Women's Business Enterprise National Council National Conference & Business Fair
Orlando, Fla. | June 19-21
www.wbenc.org

National Veteran Small Business Conference And Expo
Detroit, Mich. | June 26-29
www.nationalveteransconference.com

Small Business Summit
Knoxville, Tenn. | July 9-11
smallbusinessconference.energy.gov

9th Annual National Convention of Service Disabled Veteran & Small Businesses
Las Vegas, Nev. | July 18-20
www.sdvobconference.com

America's Small Business Development Center Network Conference
New Orleans, La. | Sept. 11-14
www.asbdc-us.org

The New York Enterprise Report Small Business Awards
New York City, N.Y. | Oct. 10, 2012
www.nyreport.com/awards

Small Business **Resources**

The Web has a trove of resources for SOHOs (small and home offices) and small businesses—if you know where to look. Find an association that can help you meet your goals; get information from the government about loans, grants, and taxes; and stay up-to-date with the best small business newsletters and blogs. If you have a pressing question, pose it on a forum to see what your peers have to say.

Associations & Support

Better Business Bureau
www.bbb.org
(703) 276-0100
4200 Wilson Blvd.
STE 800
Arlington, VA 22203-1838

Main Street Alliance (MSA)
mainstreetalliance.org
info@mainstreetalliance.org
(603) 831-1835
3518 S. Edmunds St.
Seattle, WA 98118

National Federation of Independent Businesses (NFIB)
www.nfib.com
(800) 634-2669
(615) 872-5800
53 Century Blvd.
STE 250
Nashville, TN 37214

National Small Business Association (NSBA)
nsba.biz
(202) 293-8830
1156 15th St., STE 1100
Washington, DC 20005

SCORE
www.score.org
(800) 634-0245
(703) 487-3612
1175 Herndon Pkwy
STE 900
Herndon, VA 20170

Small Business Development Centers Network (SBDCNET)
www.sbdcnet.org
(800) 689-1912
501 W. Durango Blvd.
San Antonio, TX 78207

Blogs

Signal vs. Noise
37signals.com/svn/posts

Small Business Search Marketing
www.smallbusinesssem.com

Small Biz Bee
smallbizbee.com

Small Business Trends
smallbiztrends.com

The Small Business Blog
www.sme-blog.com

The Entrepreneurial Mind
www.drjeffcornwall.com

Forums

Small Business Administration Community
www.sba.gov/community

The Small Business Community Forums
www.smallbusinessforums.org

Small Business Ideas Forum
www.smallbusinessbrief.com/forum

The Young Entrepreneur
www.youngentrepreneur.com/forum

Government

Grants.gov

House Committee On Small Business
smallbusiness.house.gov

Small Business and Self-Employed Tax Center
www.irs.gov/businesses/small

Small Business Administration (SBA)
sba.gov

U.S. Copyright Office
copyright.gov

U.S. Department of Labor
dol.gov

U.S. Senate Committee on Small Business & Entrepreneurship
sbc.senate.gov

Small Business **Development Centers**

Assistance For Entrepreneurs

Haven't the foggiest idea how to harness your entrepreneurial spirit, pull yourself anywhere using bootstraps, or think in or out of a box? Starting and running your own business is tough, but fortunately for prospective and current small business owners, SBDCs (Small Business Development Centers; asbdc-us.org) dispense with the clichés and offer training, counseling, and other assistance to help you craft your vision into a real-world success.

Run A Small Business

Pooling resources from federal, state, and local governments, as well as the private sector and the educational community, The Association of Small Business Development Centers is truly a joint venture with a vested interest in fostering small business growth. For an overview of what the SBDC can offer you and your small business, visit bit.ly/dKYe2a. The SBA (Small Business Administration; www.sba.gov) is partnered with SBDCs.

Help On Your Turf

You may be surprised to learn that there's probably an SBDC branch nearby; there are locations in all 50 states, in the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, and even in the U.S. territories. There are 63 nationwide Lead Small Business Development Centers coordinating program services for every sub-center and satellite location in each state. Centers are made up of directors, full-time staff members, and various part-time staff and volunteers.

The best way to contact your nearest SBDC is to visit the Association of Small Business Development Centers' Web site (asbdc-us.org), input your ZIP code into the Find Your Nearest Small Business Development Center text box, and then click Go. The results page will highlight Lead Centers but rank centers in order of those closest to your location. Often, SBDCs partner with universities and colleges, and tend to be found on campuses across the country. On the search results page, you'll also find a link to the local office's Web page, email address, phone number, a fax number if available, and address.

Frequent Question

If you're like many other people starting a small business, funding is at the top of your mind. A common question that entrepreneurs have for SBDCs is: "Am I eligible for grant money?"

The answer depends on the nature of your business. Grants.gov (www.grants.gov) will give you a clear picture of your options before your visit to a Small Business Development Center.

The Closest Thing To A Free Lunch

The services offered may vary by location, but all SBDCs offer many services free of charge. Some typical services you can expect from your nearest SBDC include help with financial, marketing, production, organization, engineering, and technical problems and access to feasibility studies that can flesh out a fledgling business plan. Some SBDCs also offer affordable training seminars to help with various aspects of running a business. You can also rest assured that your business with the SBDC will remain confidential.

Women's Business Centers

The SBA offers WBCs (Women's Business Centers), which directly serve female entrepreneurs through nearly 100 educational centers nationwide. This organization strives to assist women in overcoming the hurdles they face in today's business environment by offering business management training and technical assistance to all women, with a special emphasis on economically or socially disadvantaged women. The services and training programs are also commonly offered in multiple languages to enable those who speak English as a second language or are still learning English. To find your nearest WBC, visit bit.ly/hs3st2.

Small Business, Big Payoff

Small business owners know that achieving success is about taking risks, innovating, and making tough decisions day in and day out. Thanks to the services offered at the SBA, SBDCs, and WBCs, you're not on your own.

Hardware

$49.99
www.antec.com

Inconspicuous Power

Antec VP 450W Power Supply

You know you have a decent power supply if you don't even know you have a power supply. It runs quietly, keeps everything in your PC powered and running smoothly, and it doesn't dent your electricity bill. Antec's VP 450W power supply goes above and beyond for your entry-level PCs. The unit features a large 120mm fan to exhaust more heat while spinning slower than conventional 80mm fans, so it's quieter too. Stability is also a priority for Antec; this unit's dual +12V rails give it the power to handle loads of hard drives, a mid-range graphics card, as well as modern motherboard and processor requirements.

- With Antec's heavy-duty protection circuitry, this power supply delivers consistent and continuous power to ensure the reliability of the rest of your components.
- This power supply is EuP 2010 compliant, which means it is energy efficient and consumes little energy when in standby.
- Antec backs this power supply with a two-year limited warranty.

Hardware

$529.99
www.hp.com

A Performance PC For A Palatable Price

HP Pavilion p7-1226s Desktop PC

We hear a lot about the mobile revolution here at *Smart Computing,* but the fact is, the PC is still where a majority of business gets done. The HP Pavilion p7-1226s is powerful enough to handle a variety of HD media tasks, multitask so you can do more at once, and run demanding business applications with ease. Features include a dual-core 3.4GHz Intel Core i3-2130 Processor, which supports Hyper-Threading, a technology that lets the processor handle two threads at once, which comes in handy when you're running multiple applications.

- With 6GB of installed memory, the HP Pavilion p7-1226s can handle even memory-intensive applications such as photo and video editing.
- The 1TB hard drive offers plenty of space for large media files, applications, files, and more.
- A built-in 802.11b/g/n Wi-Fi adapter lets you connect this PC to the network from virtually anywhere in the office, no Ethernet needed.

Hardware

$249.99
www.lenovo.com

Expand Your Horizons

Lenovo ThinkVision L1900p 19-inch Widescreen LCD Monitor

As your window to the PC, a monitor's quality has a direct effect on everything you see and even how much work you can get done at once. Lenovo's ThinkVision L1900p 19-inch monitor features a large widescreen active matrix TN LCD display with a 1,280 x 1,024 native resolution and 86dpi, which supports most business applications. Image quality is also excellent with an 800:1 contrast ratio, 250cd/m2 image brightness, and support for DVI and VGA display connections.

- The fully adjustable stand lets you tilt, swivel, pivot, and height-adjust the monitor for comfortable viewing by any user.
- The Energy Star 4.1 rating means this monitor consumes as much as 30% less energy than a conventional monitor.
- With a three-year warranty, you can rest assured that this monitor will be with you for the long haul.

Hardware

$129.99
www.netgear.com

High-Performance Wi-Fi Within Reach

Netgear N750 Wireless Dual Band Gigabit Router

Your wireless network provides notebooks, smartphones, and other Wi-Fi-capable devices with access to the Internet and access to other computers on the network. The Netgear N750 Wireless Dual Band Gigabit Router (WNDR4000) makes sure those devices have fast and reliable access, even when running bandwidth-demanding tasks. One technology that helps is the dual band support that runs simultaneous 2.4GHz and 5GHz frequency bands, for up to 450Mbps wireless speeds. Four Gigabit Ethernet ports on the back of the router also deliver fast access to your wired devices.

- The N750 can support a variety of high-bandwidth tasks, including HD video streaming, multiple simultaneous users, online gaming, and Internet sharing to multiple PCs.
- The ReadySHARE USB port lets you connect an external hard drive for sharing data with every PC connected to the network.
- Support for Guest Network lets you allow users to log into the Internet without exposing your internal network.

Hardware

$299.99
www.rosewill.com

Protect Your Premises With Video

Rosewill RSVA-11001

Just as you wouldn't leave your PC exposed to viruses and malware, you shouldn't leave your home or business exposed to theft, break-in, and trespassing. Rosewill's RSVA-11001 is a complete surveillance-system-in-a-box that includes an 8-channel DVR box and four Sony ¼-inch CCD (charge-coupled device) Bullet Cameras. Each camera is also equipped with 21 infrared LEDs for quality performance even in complete darkness. This security system supports H.264 video compression for playback on PCs, notebooks, and mobile devices. Other features include remote monitoring from a 3G-capable smartphone and 10/100 Ethernet networking.

- The cameras produce a 720 x 480 resolution video for crystal clear images in any conditions.
- With an IP66 weatherproof rating, these cameras can be used indoors and outdoors.
- The built-in Linux-based operating system lets you add your own watermark to the video feed.

Hardware

$139.99
www.sandisk.com

Upgrade Your Storage

SanDisk Ultra 120GB Internal SSD

If you're not sold on SSDs by now, you aren't fully informed. SSDs are silent, cool, energy efficient, fast, and reliable. And the prices have been steadily falling for the past several years. This 120GB model from SanDisk makes a great replacement drive for your notebook. With it, you can expect boot times that are approximately twice as fast as a conventional hard drive. The SanDisk Ultra 120GB SSD features up to 280MB per second sequential read speeds and up to 270MB per second sequential write speeds.

- As a notebook hard drive, this SSD will reduce operating noise and extend battery life.
- SanDisk estimates this drive will operate dependably for 2 million hours or more.
- The SSD comes with a three-year limited warranty.

Hardware

$159.99
www.staples.com

Death To Documents!

Staples 15-Sheet Cross-Cut Shredder

If you've been making do by hand shredding your sensitive documents, burning them for fuel, or feeding them to your dog, perhaps it's time to get a real shredder. The Staples 15-sheet Cross-Cut Shredder will make short work of those documents by shredding 15 of them at once at 7 feet per minute. It also demolishes staples, credit cards, and CDs/DVDs. Other features include a full wastebasket indicator, an 8 minute continuous run time, and an 8.9-inch throat width.

- The V-Track shredder blade has a unique V shape to center pages as it shreds, minimizing jams.
- This shredder cuts paper and plastic into confetti; the cross-cut shred size is 0.156 inches x 0.984 inches.
- With auto reverse jam protection, the shredder reverses the blade to help you quickly remove the obstruction and refeed.

Hardware

$189.99
www.verbatim.com

External Storage Without The Bottleneck

Verbatim 64GB Store'n'Go USB 3.0 External SSD Drive

Storage will always be at a premium, especially as the size of our photos, videos, and applications continues to grow. But the problem with conventional USB flash drives or external hard drives is that the USB interface is a severe bottleneck, and transmission of any significant amount of data can take several minutes. With Verbatim's 64GB Store'n'Go USB 3.0 external SSD, however, you can enjoy plenty of external storage, and loading it onto other PCs and USB 3.0-capable devices is extremely fast.

- This external SSD supports a 160MB per second transfer rate, which will load a 1GB file onto your PC in as little as 6.4 seconds.
- This unit also supports USB 2.0 so you can swap data to and from it with any device that supports USB.
- As a solid-state device, there are no moving parts, so it's significantly more shock resistant than an external hard drive.

Accessories

$49.99
www.belkin.com

Hide Your Power Cables

Belkin Conceal Surge Protector

Belkin's BZ111200-06 Conceal Surge Protector provides cable management that ordinary surge protectors don't. The outlets are built into the unit's box, which has special clips to prevent your power cords from tangling. The device closes over the outlets, so that they are shielded from children, dust, pets, and spills. The surge protector includes 11 outlets, four of which are Belkin's BlockSpace outlets. The BlockSpace outlets provide extra room for larger plugs, such as adapters. The unit also has phone/fax/modem protection and status lights.

- Thanks to its lid, the Conceal Surge Protector can keep dirt and spills away from its outlets.
- The unit features four BlockSpace outlets, six regular outlets, and one convenience outlet—all of which are protected.
- Belkin backs this surge protector with a $300,000 connected equipment warranty.

Accessories

$54.99
www.cyberacoustics.com

3-Piece Subwoofer & Satellite Speaker System

Cyber Acoustics CA-3602

If you're looking for a sleek, powerful speaker system for your office computer, the Cyber Acoustics CA-3602 should be on your list. The subwoofer and satellite speakers provide 62 watts of total system peak power. An acoustically balanced wood cabinet houses the subwoofer. The system includes a control pod, which sports an LED (light-emitting diode) power indicator and lets you swipe your finger to adjust volume levels and bass control. Auxiliary input and headphone jacks can also be found on the pod.

- An included cradle holds your portable music player while it's connected to the speaker system.
- Control the volume or base levels with a swipe of your finger.
- Power on (or turn off) the speaker system from the convenient control pod.

Accessories

$43.99
www.fellowes.com

A Safety-Conscious Keyboard

Fellowes Microban Slimline Keyboard

The Fellowes Microban Slimline Keyboard strikes a balance between features and simplicity. It has a traditional, no-nonsense, rectangular design, but it includes some useful multimedia keys and quick-launch buttons. And the keyboard's body has Microban protection, which helps ward off microbial gunk. The quick-launch keys let you start Microsoft Office Excel or Word with a keystroke, while the multimedia buttons start (and control) your default multimedia application.

- Multimedia and quick-launch keys make this more than a traditional keyboard.
- The keyboard supports Windows as far back as Windows 98SE.
- Fellowes backs this keyboard with a three-year limited warranty.

Accessories

Starting at $199.99
www.lexar.com

Take Rapid-Fire Photos

Lexar 64GB Professional 133x SDXC Card

Cameras that support the SDXC memory format can take advantage of particularly speedy memory cards, such as the Lexar 64GB Professional 133x SDXC Card. The memory card offers minimum read speeds of 20MBps and is designed to handle your DSLR camera's burst mode. The card is speed-rated at Class 10 and supports HD video capture. Lexar tests its memory cards on a wide variety of devices at its Lexar Quality Labs to ensure that the cards are compatible with an array of devices. Owners of these cards can take advantage of Image Rescue 4, which can often recover photos and videos that have already been erased from the card.

- Capture photos in burst mode or HD video, thanks to the card's 133x speed.
- The card is available in 64GB ($199.99) and 128GB ($329.99) capacities.
- Lexar backs up its memory card with free tech support and a limited lifetime warranty.

Accessories

$39.99
www.lightwedge.com

A Sleek Tablet Case

LightWedge Verso Prologue

This cover combines protection with sophistication. It supports a wide array of e-readers, thanks to four elastic corners (which stretch to secure your device to the inside of the cover). Supported devices include the BlackBerry Playbook, Kindle 3, Nook, Nook Color, Kobo, Kobo Touch, Samsung Galaxy Tab, and other e-readers. The cover, which is designed to resemble a novel, has a pocket that can hold your ID or similar items. A larger version of this case supports the new iPad.

- A microfiber interior protects your e-reader's screen.
- Dual zippers let you quickly open or seal the case.
- Designed to look like a classic novel.

Accessories

$216
www.safcoproducts.com

Organize Your Printer & Paper

Safco Scoot Desk-Side Printer Stand

If your printer's Out Of Paper light routinely sparks a frenzied search for a new ream, this printer stand is for you. The cart is 26.5 x 26.5 x 20.5 inches (HxWxD), which makes it big enough to support typical small and home office printers. Two shelves provide plenty of paper storage, while a mini file shelf keeps manuals and other materials close. The printer stand is mobile, thanks to four casters.

- The wide top easily handles most printers.
- Two locking casters keep the printer stand in place.
- Safco backs this stand with a limited lifetime warranty.

Accessories

Starting at $50
www.verbatimstore.com

Protect Your Files On The Go

Verbatim Store 'n' Go PRO USB Flash Drive

Flash drives are easy to lose, so if you plan to store sensitive data on one, you would do well to choose a flash drive that has strong encryption. The Verbatim Store 'n' Go is one such drive, with hardware-based 256-bit AES encryption and special anti-tampering technology. The drive has Privacy (encrypted) and Public (unencrypted) Zones so you'll have easy access to everyday files. Prices start at $50 for the 4GB drive and go to $400 for the 64GB drive.

- The drive offers read speeds of 30MBps and writes speeds of 12MBps.
- A retractable USB connector gives the drive a small profile.
- An encrypted Privacy Zone keeps your files safe.

Accessories

$59.99
www.rtaproducts.com

A Versatile Laptop Table

RTA Products TechniMobili RTA-B001N

The TechniMobili is a good option for users who need to stand while typing, don't have room for a desk, or need to work in multiple locations. The stand rolls on four casters and has an extra-long leg that provides stability when a laptop is on the table. You can angle the larger tray so that the laptop faces you comfortably with the mouse tray on your left or right. The table has a height range of 29 to 44.5 inches and is available in Espresso, Graphite, and Mahogany colors.

- Easy-Pin spring system makes adjusting the table height a snap.
- A safety edge helps to keep your laptop from sliding off the table.
- The table boasts a five-year limited warranty.

Software

Starting at $96 per year
www.stopthehacker.com

Protect Your Website

StopTheHacker

StopTheHacker scans your company's website for vulnerabilities and infections that could affect customers who visit the site. There is no software for you to manage, because StopTheHacker scans your company's website regularly and automatically cleans infections without requiring your help. The service emails you when threats are found. StopTheHacker scans all of your website's pages—not just the main page—and also offers protection for your company's Facebook wall. It scans the wall for posts (from visitors) that contain links to malicious content. Additional benefits include uptime and speed monitoring.

- StopTheHacker checks your site for vulnerabilities and infections and automatically removes any malware.
- Professional (and higher) editions protect your site from unknown, as well as known, threats. Vulnerability Assessment is available with Business and Enterprise editions.
- Professional (and higher) editions automatically protect your company's Facebook wall.

Software

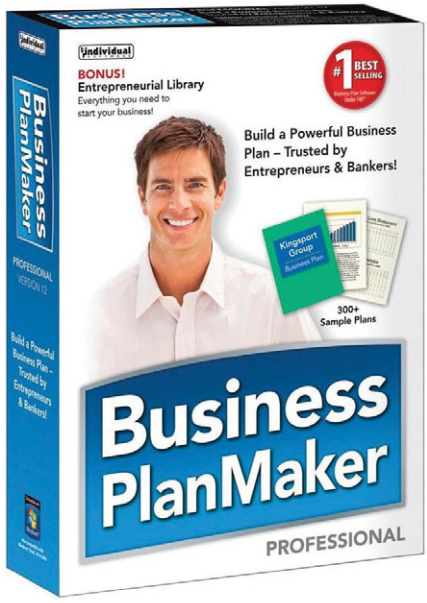
$39.99
www.individualsoftware.com

Develop A Business Plan

Individual Software Business PlanMaker Professional 12

This software provides you with instructions, advice, and how-to guides for creating a business plan. The step-by-step wizard will perform your financial projections, based on the information you provide, and include reports and charts that will help showcase sales, expenses, and cash flow to prospective funders. For example, Business PlanMaker Professional 12 will deliver an industry report with financial averages for your industry to help you forecast your business plan. Because all of the calculations are built into the software, there's no need to create formulas or manually design and build the reports. Business PlanMaker Professional will publish the report in the format that's preferred by bankers and lenders.

- Communicate your business ideas with investors.
- Perform financial forecasting based on your industry.
- Review professionally written sample plans to model your plan after successful examples.



Software

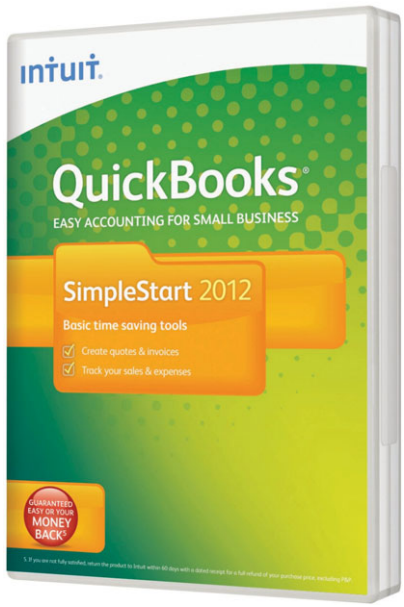
$12.95 per month
www.quickbooksonline.intuit.com

Accounting Anywhere

Intuit QuickBooks Online SimpleStart 2012

With QuickBooks Online SimpleStart, you'll have the ability to manage your finances from any location with an Internet connection, which is ideal for business owners that often work on the road or at a customer's office. The service can also be run on Android, BlackBerry, and iOS devices, so you won't even need a PC to access your financial data. QuickBooks Online SimpleStart 2012 also comes with automatic data backup and free customer support. One key new feature is the ability to import customer data from Microsoft Excel.

- You can track income and expenses with one-click business reports.
- Sales and expenses can be easily sorted.
- The cloud service lets you print checks and track payments.



Software

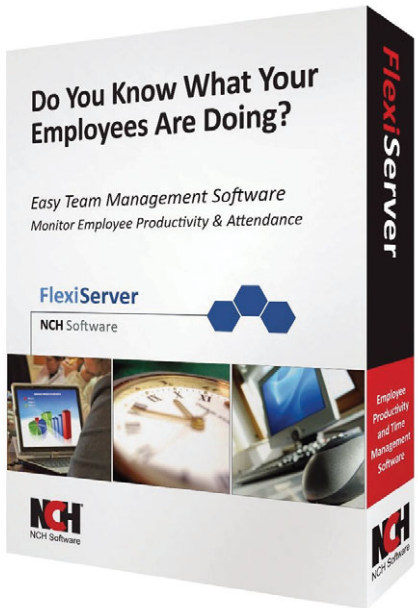
$159
www.nchsoftware.com

No More Timecards

NCH Software FlexiServer Business Edition

FlexiServer is a program that your company can use to track staff hours and monitor computer activity, so you won't have to deal with time sheets or remind staff to record and submit hours. Just install FlexiServer on all the computers and it will run in the background to log hours worked. Employees can also manually enter hours, which is handy if they'll often be working away from the PC. FlexiServer can also monitor employee hours remotely for employees who work from home. Workers can also enter a Private mode when necessary. The program also features usage monitoring that you can use to maintain quality control and comply with legal standards, and it can also reduce security risks.

- Automatically track when staff check in and out.
- Monitor what projects your staff is working on.
- FlexiServer can also be used for employees who work on the road or at home.



Software

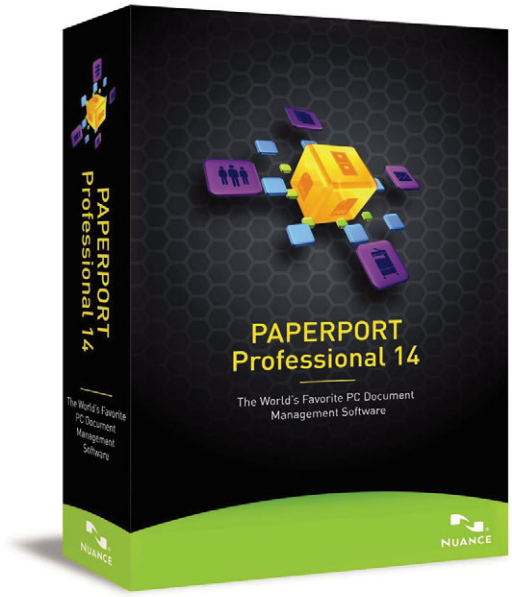
$99.99
www.nuance.com

Go Digital With Your Documentation

Nuance PaperPort 14

Looking to move digital documentation or reduce paper clutter around the office? PaperPort gives you the power to organize, share, and locate scanned documents. Even better, PaperPort will turn the scanned content, whether it is mail, legal documents, or forms, into searchable PDF files, so you can just search your computer to find important documents for later reference. Nuance also includes its Cloud Connector application, which gives you access to files that you store in cloud services, such as Box.net, Google Docs, and Microsoft Live SkyDrive. PaperPort 14's Anywhere service offers you secure access to the content on your PaperPort desktop, so you can remotely view important files and documents.

- PaperPort 14 lets you create a digital paper trail that you can search.
- The cloud service gives you remote access to your digital documentation.
- The software works with mobile applications for iPhone, iPad, and Android.



Software

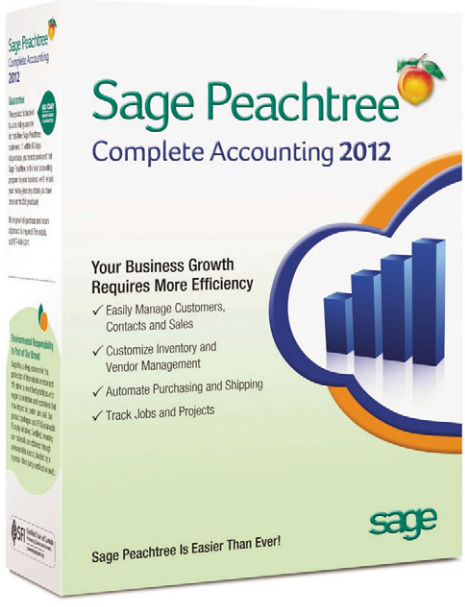
$229.99
www.peachtree.com

Professional Accounting Software

Sage Software Peachtree Pro Accounting 2012

Sage Software has added a number of improvements to Peachtree Pro Accounting 2012 that help you retrieve information faster and simplify your everyday accounting tasks. For example, the new Copy Transactions feature allows you to create a new transaction based on any previously saved one, and Copy Transactions is built into Pro Accounting 2012's variety of utilities, including Sales Orders, Proposals, and Sales Invoicing. Peachtree Business Intelligence provides you with a reporting and analysis tool that helps you gain insights about your financials. Customized dashboards can be created for specific vendors to provide visibility for your top customers and clients. There are also several new My Dashboard modules, such as Purchases Received and Item Purchase History, that deliver valuable information to your sales team.

- Manage your business with easy-to-use accounting features.
- Dashboards provide you with information for quick analysis.
- Automate workflow to ensure data is sent to the right person at the right time.



Software

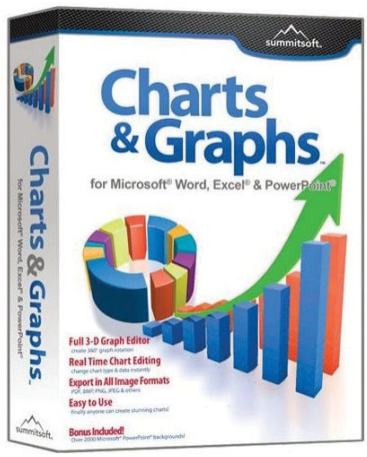
$29.99
www.summitsoftcorp.com

Spice Up Your Presentations

Summitsoft Charts & Graphs

Charts & Graphs from Summitsoft is designed to work with Microsoft's Word, PowerPoint, and Excel to take your visual presentation beyond one-dimensional graphs. For example, Summitsoft provides you with 360-degree control, so you can instantly rotate your 3D charts to highlight key aspects of your presentation. You can also "explode" individual parts of a chart to showcase impact for customers and clients. Charts & Graphs offers a wizard that guides you through the design process, and it allows you to customize all colors, labels, and legends. Another bonus is that you'll no longer need to switch between applications to illustrate data, because all of your data can be seen within your chart or graph. You can import data from Excel, text files, or .CSV files.

- Charts & Graphs lets you create impressive charts and graphs with 3D graphics.
- It's designed for use with Microsoft Office applications.
- Multi-layer charts bring your data to life for clients.



Software

$395
www.waspbarcode.com

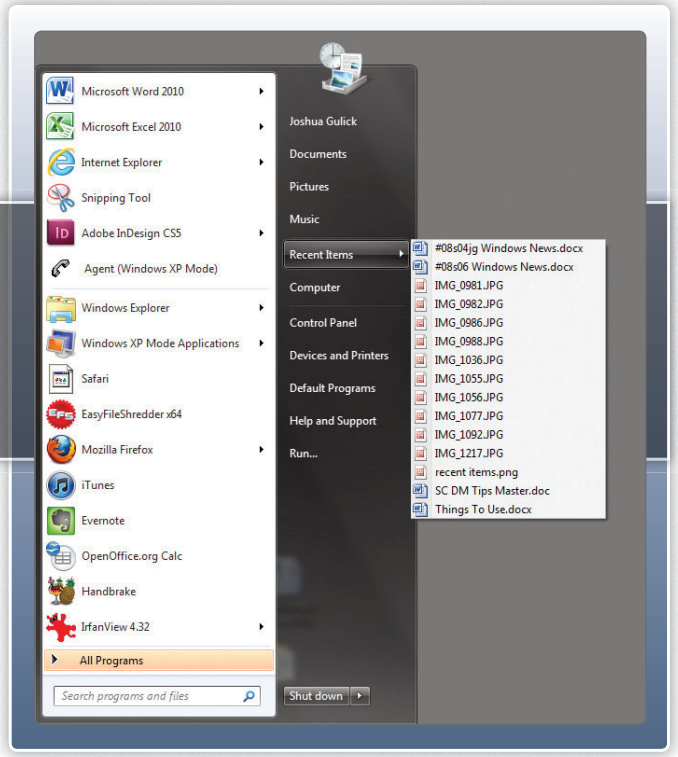
Asset Tracking Software

Wasp WLS9500 Laser Barcode Scanner Suite

If you're having trouble tracking company assets, it's time to upgrade to a software suite that uses barcodes to help simplify tracking. The WaspNest Suite from Wasp Barcode Technologies includes a barcode scanner, barcode labeling software (to help create barcodes), and tracking software. The WaspLabeler software gives you the capability to create and print barcode labels and asset tags. You can manually input or connect with external sources to obtain the label data, and it supports the custom fields found in QuickBooks accounting software. The WLS9500 scanner offers the power of multiline raster scan patterns and support for motion tolerance, so it can perform even in harsh environments. You'll be able to monitor the quantity of products on hand, as well as where the product is located.

- The WLS9500 includes both software and a barcode scanner.
- The suite provides your company with asset tracking tools.
- The software helps reduce the time spent searching for lost and unreturned assets.

Windows News, Views & Tips



Adding the Recent Items button to your Start menu means you'll have easy access to some of the documents you use most.

MICROSOFT NEWS

Windows Azure Media Services

Microsoft highlighted media services platform at the 2012 NAB (National Association of Broadcasters) conference in Las Vegas recently. The software giant is attracting media services to its Windows Azure cloud computing technology. Among the benefits of Azure (for media services) are Azure's scalable cloud storage capabilities and its support for streaming video to a variety of Microsoft-based operating systems and devices, including smart TVs, Mac iOS, Android, Windows Phone, Windows PCs, and Xbox 360. The service is targeted at entertainment companies and other companies that wish to provide video over the Internet. Microsoft cites an internal study that found video to be one-third of Internet traffic. It projects video's traffic footprint will grow to 80% in 2015. On a related note, Microsoft also published the "Broadcast Reference Architecture" white paper. It is available at tinyurl.com/6mdr56b.

Halo 4 Is On The Way

We don't cover games often, but some are too big to ignore. Microsoft's already wildly popular Halo game series (which runs on PCs and the Xbox 360) will get a shot in the arm this November with the arrival of Halo 4. Microsoft is known for massive product launches: You can expect that (game character) Master Chief will make his return with plenty of fanfare.

WINDOWS TIPS

Put Recent Items On The Start Menu

Windows 7 has a Recent Items feature, which can display any documents you've recently used. To put this button on your Start menu, click Start and then right-click the Start menu. Click Properties. When the Taskbar And Start Menu Properties window opens, click the Start Menu tab and then click the Customize button. When the Customize Start Menu window opens, scroll down to Recent Items and check its box. Click the OK button. Click the OK button on the Taskbar And Start Menu Properties window. Now, click the Start button. You'll see the Recent Items button on the right side of the Start menu. Hover the mouse pointer

over Recent Items (or click it) and you'll see the list of recently used documents. Click any document in the list to open that item.

Pin A Website To The Taskbar

If you have Windows 7 and Internet Explorer 9, you can pin websites to your Taskbar. Open the site in Internet Explorer, drag the tab to the Taskbar, and release the mouse button. A shortcut button now sits on your Taskbar. Simply click it to open Internet Explorer. The browser will automatically open the site. ▌

Microsoft is nailing down the details for Windows 8, which launches this year. One important development: The nickname "Windows 8" is now the operating system's official name.

Handy Keyboard Shortcuts

Windows has tons of keyboard shortcuts, some of which can speed up your day-to-day tasks. This month, we show you shortcuts for two handy Windows tools: Magnifier and WordPad. WordPad is a basic document editor; Magnifier zooms in on your screen so you can better see text and small images.

SHORTCUT	FUNCTION
CTRL-1	This command sets line spacing to single in WordPad.
CTRL-2	Use this command to set double line spacing in WordPad.
CTRL-F	Use this command in WordPad (and some other word editors, including Microsoft Word) to open the Find tool.
CTRL-N	In WordPad (Windows' built-in word editor), this command opens a new, blank document.
F12	In WordPad, this command saves your document as a new file. To simply save your existing document without creating new one, press CTRL-S.
WIN-Minus Sign	This command causes the Windows Magnifier to zoom out.
WIN-Plus Sign	Use this command to start the Windows Magnifier and zoom in. Press it again to zoom in further.
WIN-ESC	This command closes the Windows Magnifier.

WINDOWS NEWS

Windows 8 Editions

It's official: "Windows 8" is no longer just a nickname for its forthcoming OS. The new operating system will indeed be called Windows 8. Microsoft plans two editions for PCs: Windows 8 (which will appeal to home users) and Windows 8 Pro. These editions will also appear on tablets powered by x86 processors (32- and 64-bit). Microsoft is also launching an edition, called Windows RT, which will be used on WOA (Windows on ARM) tablets. These tablets have ARM processors.

So what are the differences between Windows 8 and Windows 8 Pro? Microsoft says that the Pro version will have some extra features, including encryption and virtualization features and the ability to host a remote desktop, among others. If your computer has Windows 7 Starter, Home Basic, or Home Premium, you will be able to upgrade to Windows 8 or Windows 8 Pro. If your PC has Windows 7 Professional or Ultimate, you'll need to upgrade to Windows 8 Pro.

Both Windows 8 and Windows 8 Pro will feature the new Metro user interface, which has Live Tiles that display information about your social networks and applications. Both OSes will have access to the online Windows Store and will feature apps and services, such as Calendar, Mail, Messaging, People, Photos, SkyDrive, and others. ▌

When To Upgrade To Windows 8

Move Your Business To A New OS

With Microsoft releasing the Consumer Preview of Windows 8 (and the recently announced Release Preview expected in June), there's a lot of excitement about the new operating system. If you're considering upgrading to the new operating system at launch—which many experts believe will be released sometime in late October—you'll want to consider the pros and cons of making the change. Here, we'll provide you with some info to help you make your decision.

System Requirements

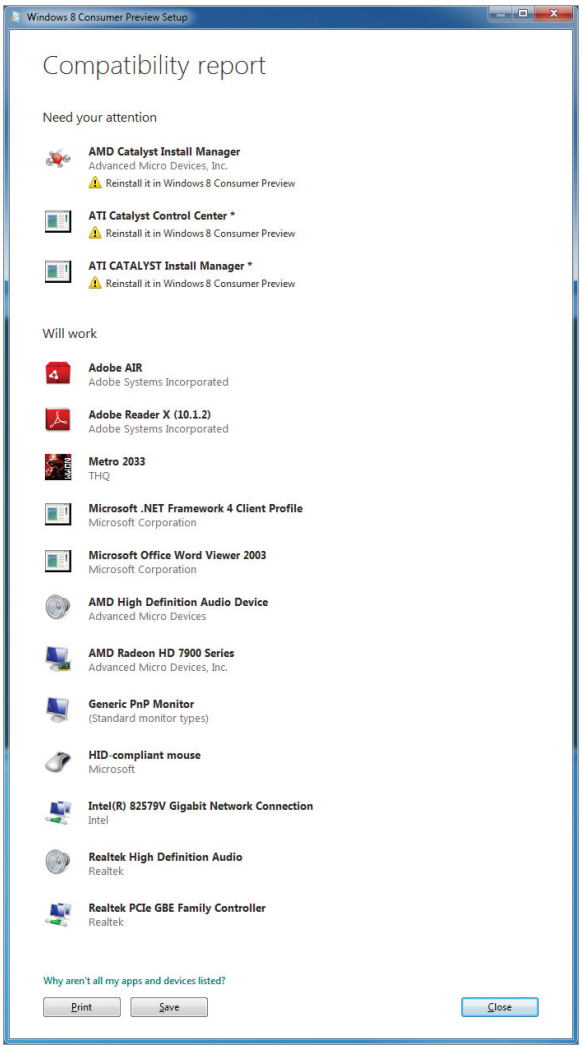
First, you'll need to make sure that any system you have in the office will be capable enough to handle Windows 8. Though unofficial for the final version, Microsoft has released hardware recommendations for the Windows 8 Consumer Preview, and we believe most any system purchased within the past two years should easily meet the standards. Check out the "System Requirements" sidebar for a checklist of system requirements. Note that if you're budgeting for new PCs around the end of the year, it's likely that you'll be able to choose between Windows 7 and Windows 8 operating systems.

Software & Hardware Compatibility

Before you upgrade, you'll want to double-check that all of your critical business software, such as your accounting and productivity applications, will be compatible with Windows 8 when it's released. If not, you may need to keep Windows 7 (or set up a dual-boot configuration) on a few PCs around the office. In terms of hardware, components that require drivers (such as graphics cards and network adapters) must also offer support for Windows 8.

Windows 8 Business Features

Thus far, we've covered some cons you may face, but Microsoft has built-in a number of features that may make the Windows 8 upgrade ideal for your business. For example, the Metro interface, which is composed of tiles that update with information about your applications, is more intuitive to use because it's designed to be used with a touch-



The Windows 8 Consumer Preview will provide you with a Compatibility Report, which can help you figure out which applications and hardware will run on the new OS.

screen. As such, it should be easier for employees to learn the new operating system than it was in the past. Another helpful feature is Windows To Go, which allows you to

create a custom Windows 8 deployment with all of the applications and settings an employee would normally use. Windows To Go can be installed on a flash drive, so you can quickly and conveniently install the same apps and settings onto multiple computers.

Meant For Mobile

Microsoft is designing Windows 8 so that it can also work on today's mobile devices, including tablets and smartphones. If Windows 8 offers compatibility for your applications across your work PCs, tablets, and smartphones, it will be easy for mobile employees to work with all types of files on the road. No longer will they need to download and use separate apps to handle each type of file they'll need access to on their mobile devices.

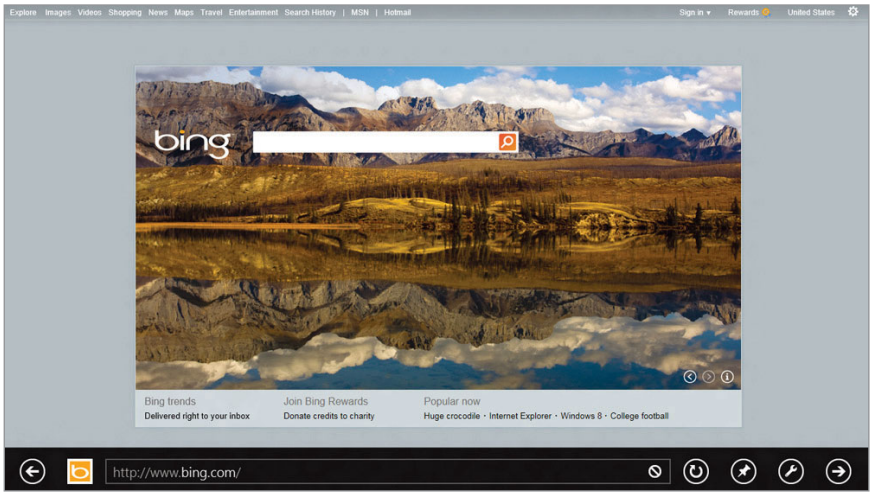
System Requirements

Review that your office computers meet the following specifications.

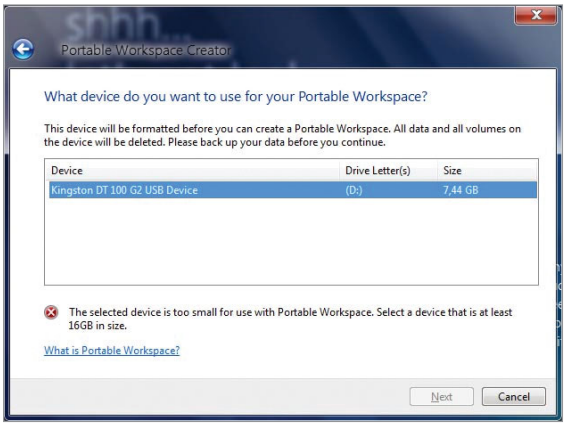
- ☑ 1GHz or faster processor
- ☑ 1GB of memory (32-bit OS) or 2GB of memory (64-bit OS)
- ☑ 16GB of free storage capacity on the hard drive or SSD (solid-state-drive)
- ☑ Graphics processor that supports DirectX 9 with a Windows Display Driver Model 1.0 or higher driver.

In Conclusion

You may consider testing out the Windows 8 Consumer Preview or Release Preview on a work system to see how you like it. If Microsoft's Compatibility Report indicates that all hardware and software will be supported, install it on a few computers and see if employees are gaining a benefit from the new features. If so, go ahead and roll out Windows 8 to the rest of your workforce. ▌



Windows 8 will feature Internet Explorer 10.



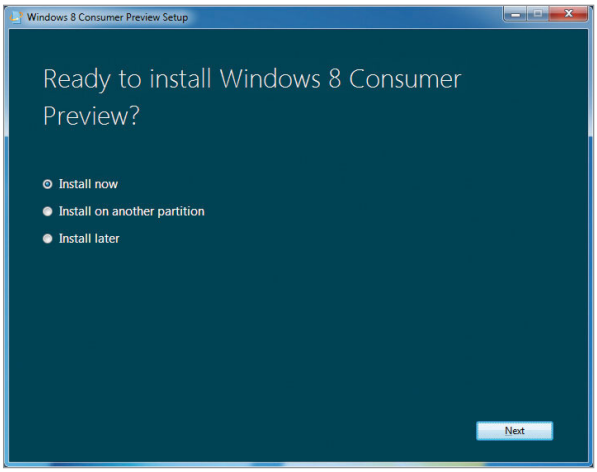
Windows To Go lets you install a version of Windows with your office's applications built-in.

The Live Tiles interface in Windows 8 makes it more intuitive than traditional editions of Windows.

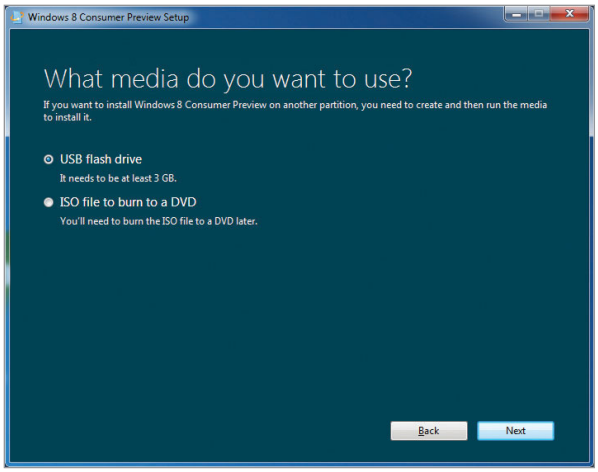
Install Windows 8 Consumer Preview

Get Hands-On With The Next Version Of Windows

If you're the type of person who likes to test drive several models before you settle on a new car or walk around the store wearing a new pair of shoes before you decide to buy, then you probably want to see what Windows 8 will be like before you install it. Well, you're in luck. The Windows 8 CP (Consumer Preview) is Microsoft's way of giving us a taste of what's to come in the retail version of Windows 8. (At press time, Microsoft announced that the Windows 8 Release Preview—formerly known as the Release Candidate—would be available the first week of June; the Release Preview is typically the last test version before the retail version is released.) Read on for our step-by-step instructions on how to download and install the Windows 8 CP.



Microsoft gives you three options for where and when to install the Windows 8 Consumer Preview.



Unless you're overwriting your current Windows installation, we recommend burning an ISO or installing using a flash drive.

Step 1

The first step in getting an early look at Windows 8 is to visit Microsoft's download site. Launch your browser, type the following address into your Address bar, tinyurl.com/7pvoxxb, and then press ENTER. Click the Get It Now button and then click the Download Windows 8 Consumer Preview button on the following page. (If you'd like, you can input your email address and region and click the privacy terms agreement checkbox to subscribe to Microsoft's Windows 8-specific newsletter.)

Step 2

When the installer finishes downloading, launch it and click Run when you see the Open File Security Warning. The software proceeds to check your computer's compatibility with the Windows 8 CP and displays a report of the number of installed programs that will work fine and the number that won't.

Step 3

To view the report, click See The Compatibility Report and take note of any items in the Need Your Attention category. These applications won't work natively in the Windows 8 CP. You may have to reinstall these applications after the Windows 8 setup completes or find versions that support Windows 8. In our test, the only application that was a problem was the software that accompanies our AMD Radeon HD graphics card, but AMD offers a Windows 8 CP-compatible version of the driver. To print or save this page for later reference, click the appropriate buttons at the bottom of the screen. Click Close when you're ready to proceed and then click Next in the setup wizard.

Step 4

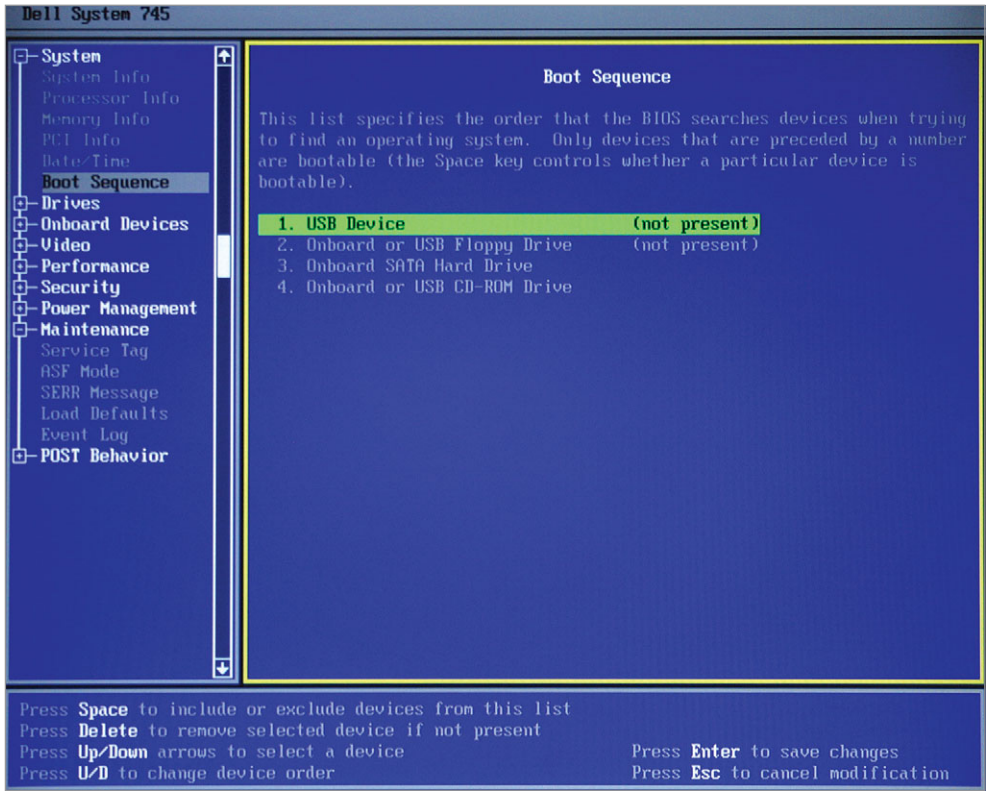
When you see the Windows 8 CP product key, write it down and then click Next to initiate the download. When the download completes, the utility will spend a few moments checking the download and getting files ready.

Windows 8 Tips

When Will Microsoft Release The Retail Version Of Windows 8?
Windows 8 is slated to launch in October 2012.

When Will The Windows 8 Consumer Preview Expire?
Start by pressing the Windows Key and the *R* keys simultaneously to open the Run dialog box. Next, type winver and press the ENTER key. According to our system, the Windows 8 CP will expire Jan. 16, 2013.

Don't Have A Microsoft Account?
Don't worry. You can click links on the Sign In To Your PC page to create a new email address for your Microsoft account or to sign in without a Microsoft Account.



The procedure for changing your PC's boot sequence in the BIOS Setup Utility will vary among PCs.

Step 5

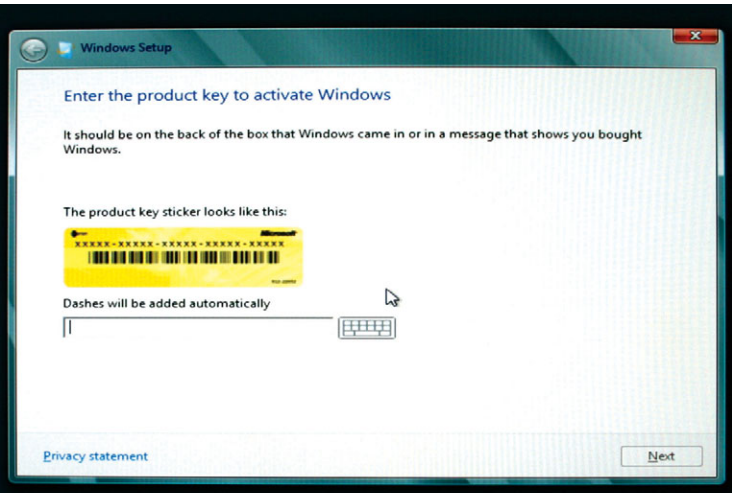
Next, you'll see a screen that gives you the option to Install Now, Install On Another Partition, or Install Later. Click the radio button for your preferred option and then click Next. For the remainder of this tutorial, we'll follow the Install On Another Partition procedure. This way, you don't risk overwriting your current Windows with one that will expire shortly. If you select Install Later, the setup wizard will close. You can relaunch it anytime by double-clicking the Install Windows shortcut on your Desktop.

Step 6

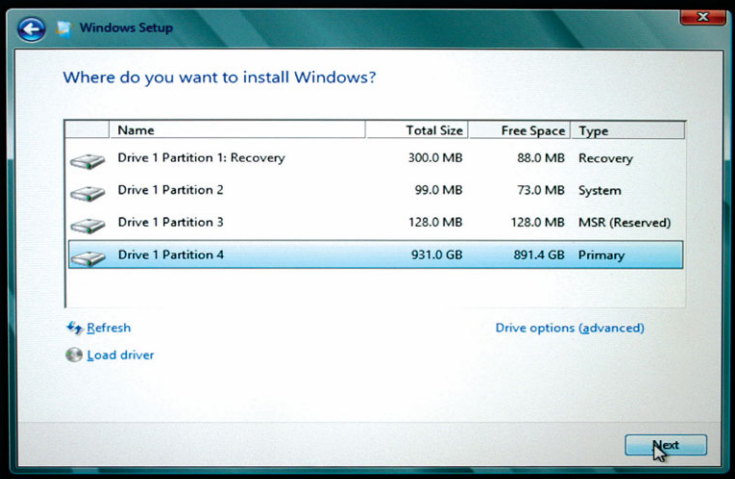
To install the Windows 8 CP on another partition, you'll need to burn the ISO (International Organization for Standardization) file to a DVD or use a USB flash drive that is 3GB or larger. Click the radio button adjacent to the option you want and then click Next. We chose to use a flash drive, so the rest of this tutorial will follow that procedure.

Step 7

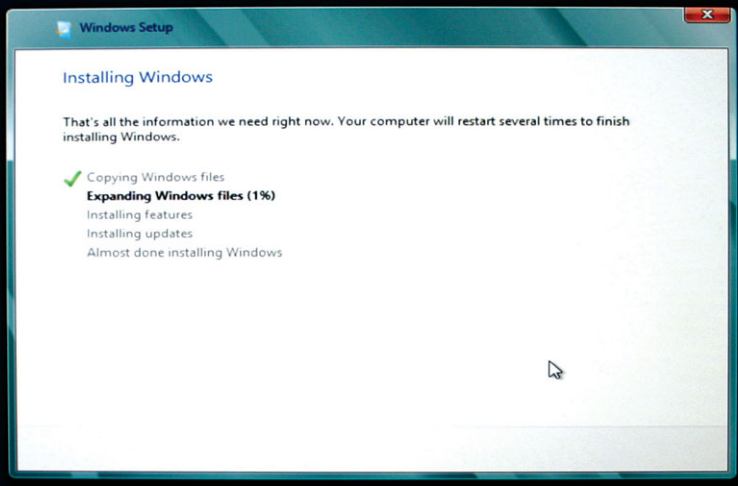
Plug a 3GB or larger USB flash drive into an available USB port and the setup wizard will detect it. If more than one flash drive is detected, make sure you click the appropriate one and then click Next. A pop-up dialog box will warn you that all data on the flash drive will be deleted if you proceed. Click Yes to continue. The setup wizard will then create a bootable USB Flash drive that will install the Windows 8 CP on your PC. Once complete, you'll get another glimpse of the product key.



Make sure you type the Windows product key correctly to proceed with your installation.



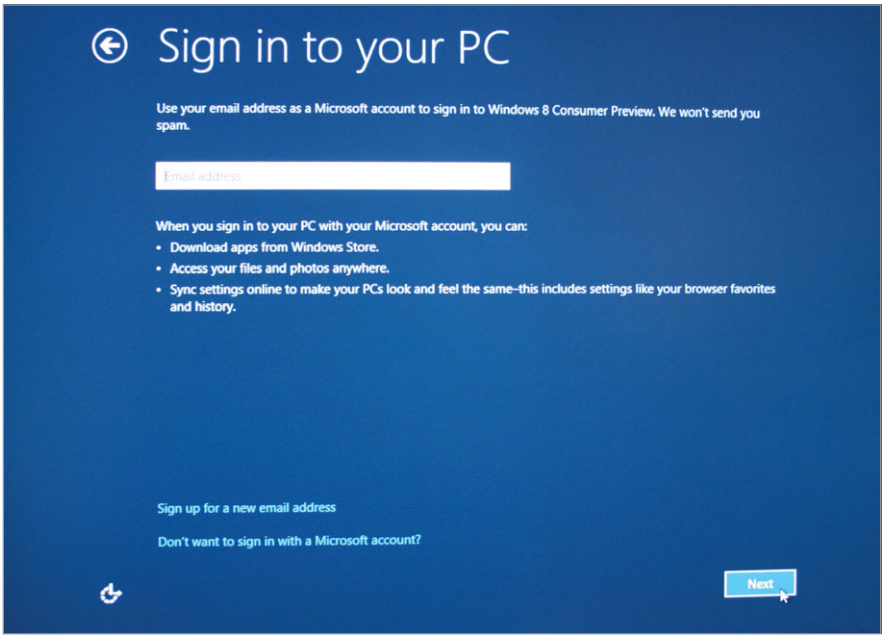
You may want to unplug the hard drive or SSD (solid-state-drive) that houses your current Windows installation to prevent an accidental deletion.



The process of copying and expanding files, and installing features and updates may take some time.

Step 8

Now, restart your PC and get ready to access your BIOS (Basic Input/Output System) Setup Menu by pressing the designated key during boot. The navigation and option titles in the BIOS Setup Utility differ greatly among PCs, so the following steps will also vary. Pressing DELETE, F1, or F2 will typically get you into the BIOS, but the correct keystroke will often appear on-screen during boot. Once in the BIOS Setup Utility, you need to make the USB flash drive your first boot device, so look for a menu option such as Boot Sequence, Boot Priority, or Boot Menu. Frequently, the BIOS Setup Utility displays how to change the boot priority once you've accessed the correct menu; common ways to change boot sequence include highlighting the USB flash drive option and pressing the Plus key (+) or PAGE UP key to move it to the top of the list. Save changes and reset, typically by pressing F12.



Signing in to your PC with a Microsoft account gets you access to apps from the Microsoft Store, cloud-based photo and file access, and more.

Step 9

As the system boots from the USB flash drive, the Windows 8 beta fish logo appears on-screen followed by the Windows Setup language and locale options screen. Click Next to proceed. Click Install Now on the following screen and then input your Windows 8 CP product key on the next screen. Click Next to review the license terms, click I Accept, and then click Next.

Now that you have the Windows 8 Consumer Preview installed, it's time to explore!

Step 10

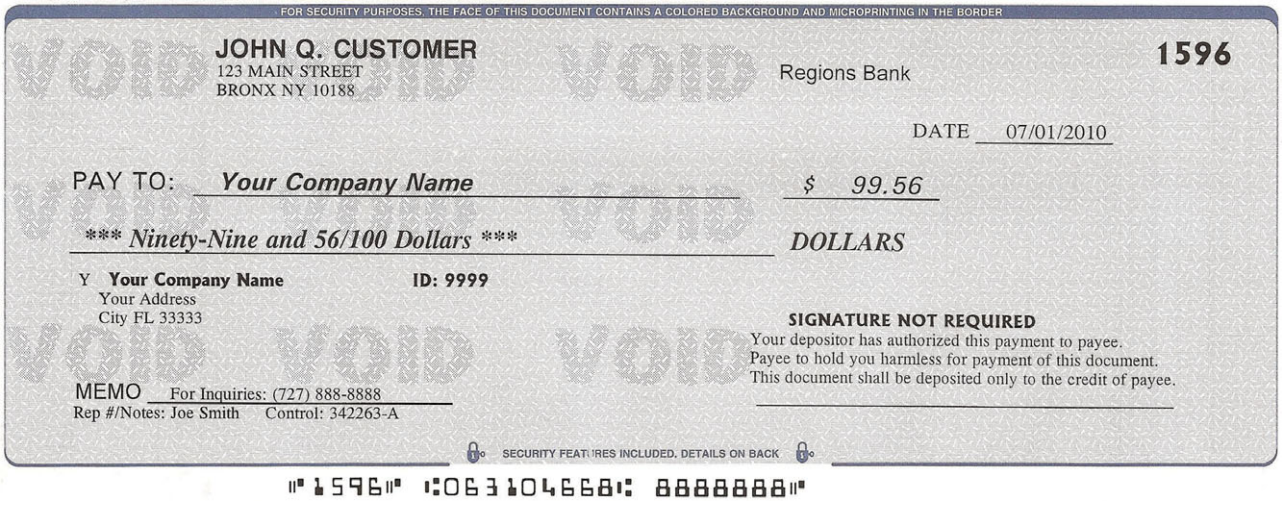
On the Which Type Of Installation Do You Want screen, click Custom (unless you plan to overwrite your current Windows installation). Click the storage partition upon which you plan to install the Windows 8 CP and then click Next to complete the install. It may take 20 minutes or more depending on your hardware specs, but when the installation finishes, you'll be able to personalize your new Windows 8 system, configure security and updating settings, and link your installation to a Microsoft account.

What The Future Holds

The procedure for installing the Windows 8 CP is a lot like installing any new operating system. When you're finished, however, you'll get a real feel for the direction Microsoft plans to take the personal computer later this year and beyond.

Business Tech

Print Your Own Checks



The code along the bottom of a check is typically printed with magnetic ink or toner.

With the DNA Secure feature found in VersaCheck's software, you can add unique graphics and security text to your checks.

DNA Secure Checks offer the ultimate in check security

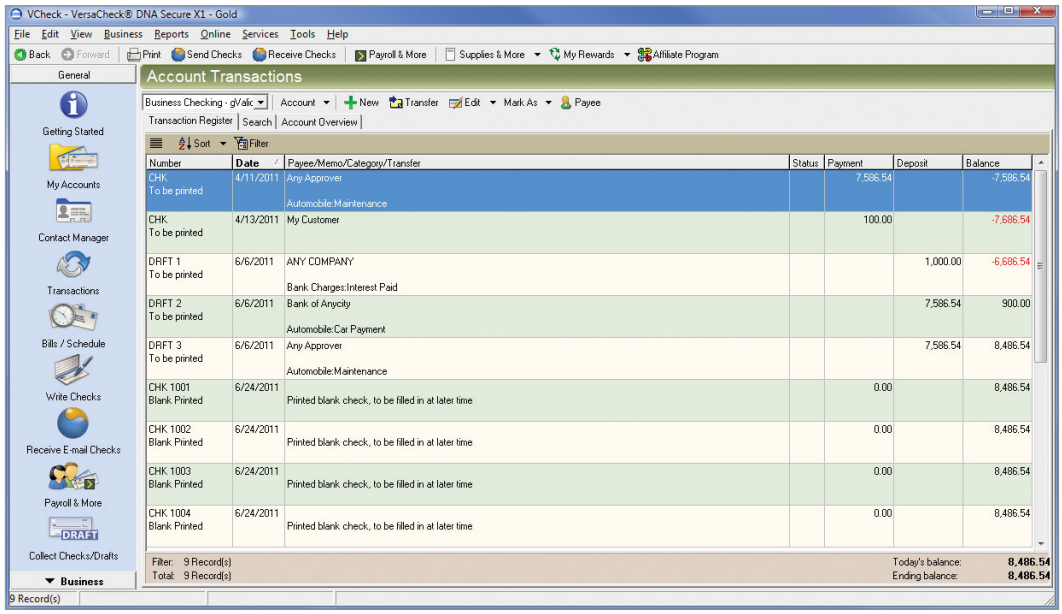
Did you know that it's possible to print your own business checks? You can use your PC to create personalized, custom checks that appear as professional as what you'd order from the bank. Here, we'll cover how to print your own checks.

The Brains

First, you'll need a check creation application, such as one from VersaCheck's (www.versacheck.com) lineup of programs, that allows you to print secure checks—complete with eSignatures and safeguards that eliminate unauthorized check payments. Many check creation applications also work with popular financial accounting software, so you can import data and information directly from your money management program. VersaCheck's software offers a feature titled DNA Secure, which uses the background image on the check to uniquely individualize it with security patterns and text. You can even add UV (ultraviolet) logos that will only be visible under a black UV light.

The Brawn

In terms of hardware, you'll need a PC that's compatible with your check creation software, a printer, and in some cases, blank checks. The printer should support the use of MICR (magnetic ink character recognition) ink or toner, which lets you create the identification numbers running along the bottom of the check that allows for fast check clearing. Note that MICR ink or toner isn't mandatory, as some banks now use optical code readers, but if a non-MICR check reaches a bank with a magnetic reader, it will take longer to cash (and may cost you or your payee a fee) because the bank must manually clear it.



VersaCheck's software will help you create and print business checks, as well as manage your finances.

Nathan Lake

Many check creation tools allow you to add an eSignature to your checks so you don't need to manually write it.

There are a number of advantages to purchasing blank checks. Most are designed to comply with the professional standards of the CPSA (Check Payment Systems Association) and ANSI (American National Standards Institute). For example, VersaCheck offers blanks that include artificial watermarks (so they cannot be copied or scanned by forgers), erasure protection that produces a white mark on the check when content is erased, and fine print on the boarders that will appear as a dotted line if photocopied. When ordering blank checks, you'll also want to ensure that they are compatible with the check creation software you purchased; otherwise, the printing may not match up with the text sections of the check.

How-To

Although each check creation software is different, we'll guide you through the basic process of printing your own checks. Ideally, you'll want to have most of the information printed on the check so you won't have to manually fill out the information. When designing your business checks, you'll typically be able to add a company logo, which is generally placed next to your business address in the upper-left corner. Next, you'll need to add your bank's information and sequential check numbers. Some applications, such as VersaCheck's software, will automatically fill out the check number and track it, so you don't repeat numbers. Next, import the payee and financial information from your accounting software, or leave it blank if you plan to manually write the info. If possible, add security icons and text that will make the check harder to reproduce. If your check creation software offers an eSignature, which is a virtual reproduction of your signature, you won't even need to sign the checks.

Website Makeover

Bring In Business With A Better Design

You know how important your company website is. You have one, and you update it regularly to keep things fresh for potential clients. And yet, you're not quite satisfied with it, are you? Your website is respectable and looks professional, but in the back of your mind, you wonder if it could be doing a better job of selling your business. Chances are, your website has some room for improvement.

This example website has plenty of room for improvement. The grass image is interesting, but it doesn't give the visitor a sense of the services that Cutting Edge provides. More importantly, it makes the company name difficult to read. The text on the main page lacks organization and doesn't guide the reader. After a makeover with 1&1 MyWebsite, these problems have been corrected. The image is more compelling, the company name is easy to read, and now it includes "Landscape," so visitors know right away what the service provides. Testimonials, contact information, and images of previous work are easy to spot.

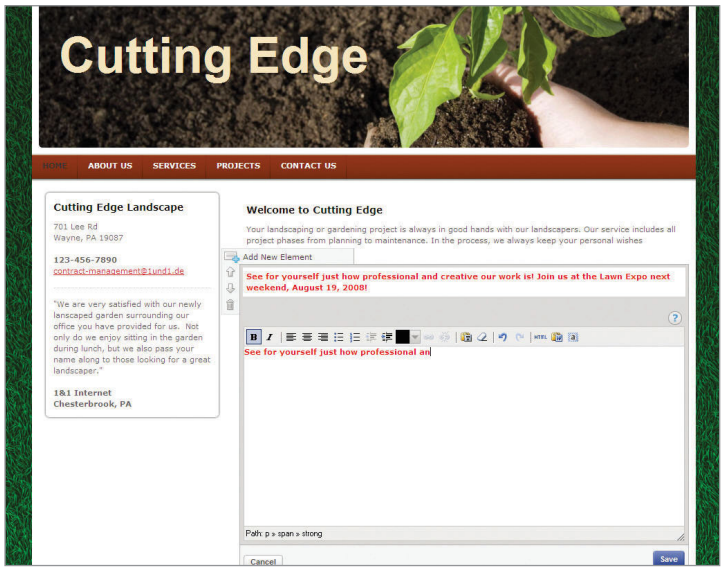
after makeover

Happily, bringing your website up to speed isn't difficult. We teamed with 1&1 Internet's website-building tool 1&1 MyWebsite (mywebsite.1and1.com) to show you how an average website can be transformed into a sales tool. Follow these easy website design tips and your site will have the polish and information to turn visitors into clients.

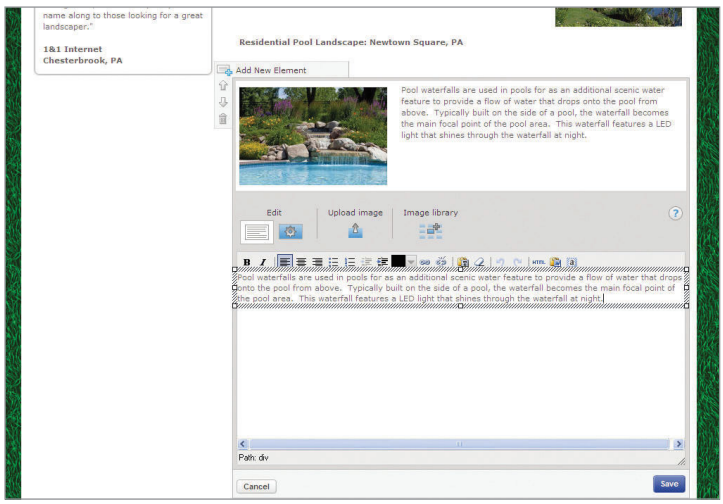
Website Layout & Design

Flow is critical to your website's effectiveness. Does your website guide visitors to the pages you want them to see, in the order that you want them to be viewed? If you aren't creating a path that your site visitors will follow, they may never see information that could lead to a contract or sale.

Your site should guide your visitors through an explanation of who you are and what services your business provides (in general terms) before getting into details about specific services. Finally, it should direct them to your contact information. For most sites, the menu bar is that guide. Organize its tabs, assuming that the reader will click them in order (left-to-right for



1&1 MyWebsite's text editor lets you change colors, fonts, and text sizes, among other characteristics. Feel free to use bold colors, but keep your design consistent throughout the site.



Use images to emphasize points in your text. When uploading a photo to your site with 1&1 MyWebsite, you can move, crop, and edit the image.

horizontal menu bars; top-down for vertical bars).

Consistency is important to the flow of your website. Create a color scheme (you may want to base it off your company logo) and then use those colors throughout the site. Keep the text consistent, too: Try to cover one topic per page, rather than cram multiple ideas together.

Another important aspect of good website design is readability. Loud backgrounds can make your text hard to read. The same goes for light text colors or complicated fonts. You're not likely to make this mistake with the site's main text, but it's easy to forget these rules when adding text to menu bars and other parts of the website. Generally speaking, avoid using all capital characters, as your visitors may interpret text in all caps as yelling.

Giving your main page a frank assessment will likely turn up plenty of problems, but that's a good thing. Improving your website boils down to troubleshooting: Solve the problems, and you'll have a better site.

Photo Integration

In many ways, your website amounts to an elevator pitch. Your site has just a few short minutes (or less) to convince visitors that you are a pro and that you offer the services they need. Photos can play a big role in quickly forming a visitor's opinion, so give him as much thought as you do to the text. Use photos to illustrate your main points.

As we mentioned in the previous tip, certain visuals greatly affect your website's effectiveness. Skip images that will distract the reader from your work. In fact, when possible, use images of your work to show visitors what you are capable of and build their confidence that your business is the right one to take on their projects.

Testimonial Features

Showcase your testimonials. Use quote marks and, if your client approves, his name and general location. Many websites set the quotes in italics. It's generally acceptable to shorten

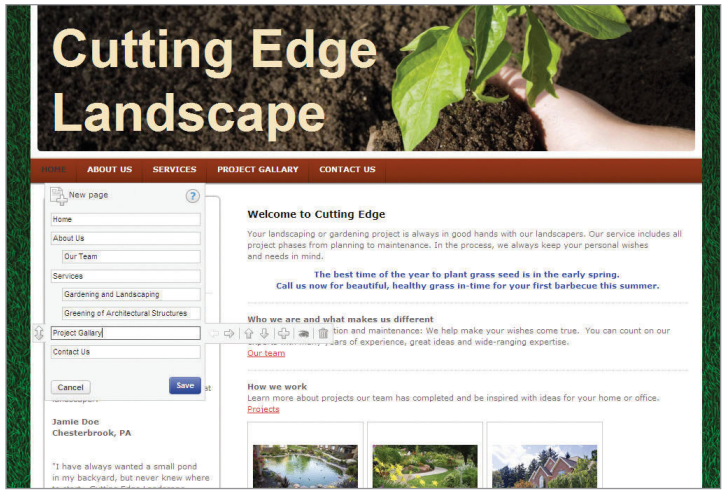
a lengthy quote with ellipses (…), but run any such change past your customer before putting the quote online, or you run the risk of alienating a customer who disapproves of your edits.

Photos of past work make for excellent testimonials—and they can give visitors new ideas for their own projects. When you provide a photo of work you did for previous clients, make sure the reader understands the context of the picture. A caption, for example, gives you a chance to explain the goal and outcome of the project.

Contact Information Visibility

Putting your contact information on the main page will give your company an instant credibility boost in the eyes of many visitors. At the very least, include a Contact Us page that provides multiple ways to reach you.

Keep in mind that many customers use social networks. Create profiles for your company on popular networks and encourage your site visitors to Like (Facebook) or Follow (Twitter) you. And don't forget to link from your social network profiles back to your website.



The menu bar walks your site visitor through your sales pitch and to your contact information.

Give Your New Look Another Look

We'd be surprised if all this shuffling and updating didn't lead to the occasional typo, broken link, or wrong graphic. Before you unveil the site to the public (or as soon as possible afterward, if you're a little ahead of us), browse your website; particularly your main page. You'll have a better chance of catching mistakes if you read it out loud (take it from us), but even a quick read-through ought to turn up any glaring errors. With that last bit of polish, your site is ready for prime time—and you can get back to business. ❙

The Projects gallery in this example site would benefit from context: Where did this happen? Who was the client? A site visitor isn't likely to relate to these photos. After a makeover with the 1&1 MyWebsite tool, however, the page is ready to inspire visitors with clear descriptions that promote the company's capabilities.

after makeover

Your Guide To New Technology

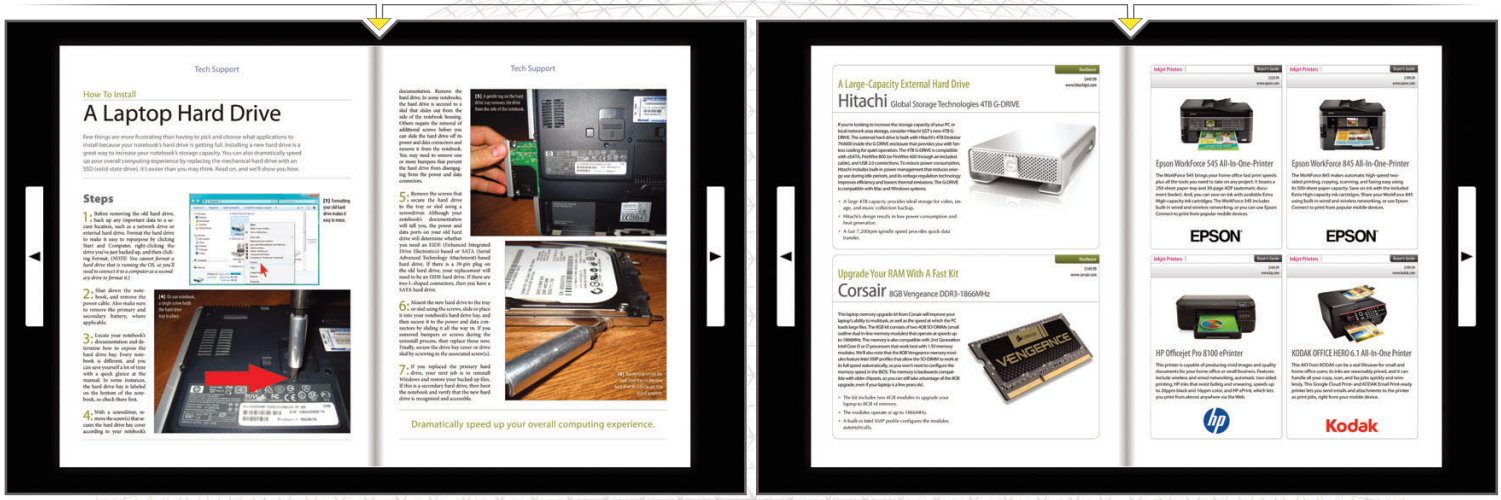
When you buy technology for your home or small office, a little research can go a long way.

That's why *Smart Computing* brings you news, reviews, and instructions for setting up the latest products each month. We keep you up to speed on computers, components, software, and the ever-growing world of online services. Our plain-English articles define unfamiliar, technology-related words so you can shop with confidence. What's more, *Smart Computing* shows you how to set up and use many of the products available today.

Tutorial

Overviews

Buyer's Guides



computers | components | software | online services | new products

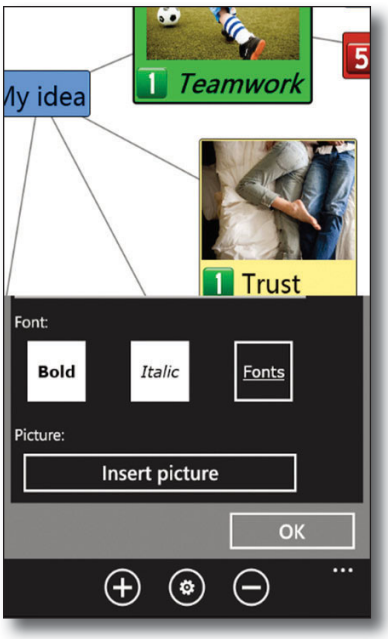
SmartComputing In Plain English

WWW.SMARTCOMPUTING.COM

Mobile Marketplace

Business Apps *For Android & Windows Phone 7*

Some powerful business tools are floating in the sea of smartphone apps. Each month, we'll highlight some of the best ones for Windows 7 and Android platform users. (Unless otherwise noted, Windows Phone 7 apps are available in the Windows Phone Marketplace, and you'll find Android apps in Google Play).



Brainstorming

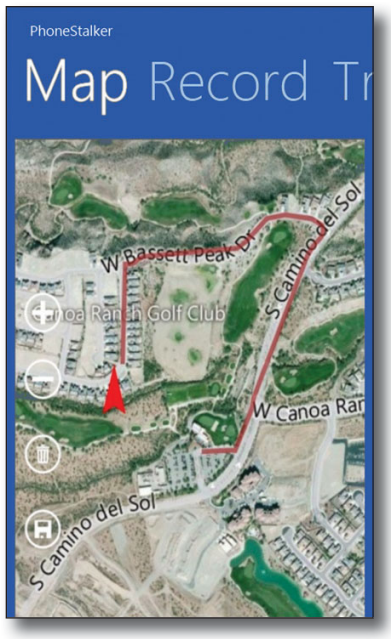
Windows Phone 7

Brainstorming ($1.99) lets you do exactly what its name implies: It's an app for organizing and prioritizing your thoughts. This app helps users create mind maps for business plans, impromptu spitball sessions, complex projects, or just to quickly get an idea out while it's still fresh. Features include the ability to adjust formatting, change the color of each note, number the notes to signify priority or steps in a sequence, add images, add hyperlinks, save a completed mind map as an image, and share mind maps with others via email.

FTP On The Go

Windows Phone 7

Anyone who travels frequently knows how frustrating it can be to get or send large files when away from the office. With FTP On The Go ($4.99), however, those frustrations are a thing of the past. This application lets users manage files on an FTP server and update websites from anywhere. Features include the ability to browse, upload, and download from your FTP server; download and edit text files with a built-in editor; search documents with a Go To Line Number function; and batch editing tools such as Find/Replace. You can also rename, delete, and move files on FTP, SFTP, FTPS, and even FXP for server-to-server transfers.



PhoneStalker

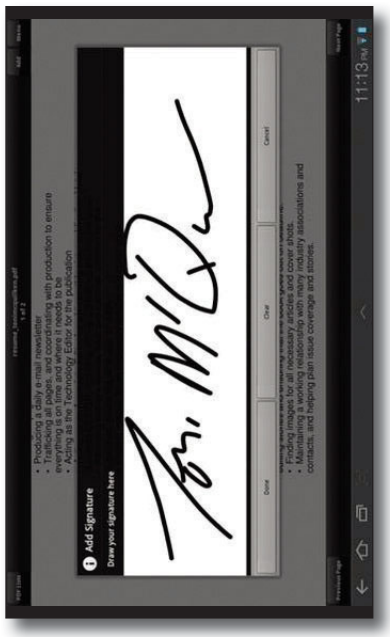
Windows Phone 7

PhoneStalker ($1.49) is a handy utility that lets you track your phone's movements in real time. PhoneStalker is capable of tracking your phone's position by reporting speed, direction, longitude, latitude, altitude, and the accuracy based on the GPS signal. Turn on the recording feature to make a map to your car in a large parking lot, let it run in the background so you can find your phone if it's ever lost or stolen, record your route during workouts, measure the distance of your golf drive, and more. You can also use the Mark & Measure functions to determine the straight-line distance between any two points.

FolderSync

Android

FolderSync ($2.29) is one of the easiest ways to get files and data from the cloud to your Android-based device and back again. FolderSync lets you sync files among multiple accounts from many popular cloud storage services, including SkyDrive, Dropbox, SugarSync, Ubuntu One, Box, LiveDrive, HiDrive, Google Docs, NetDocuments, Amazon S3, FTP, FTPS, SFTP, WebDAV, and more. You can use the app to back up media and documents from your phone, and it also lets you browse the files on your device. Other features include user-defined sync filters, two-way sync, and the ability to set up sync intervals and times.

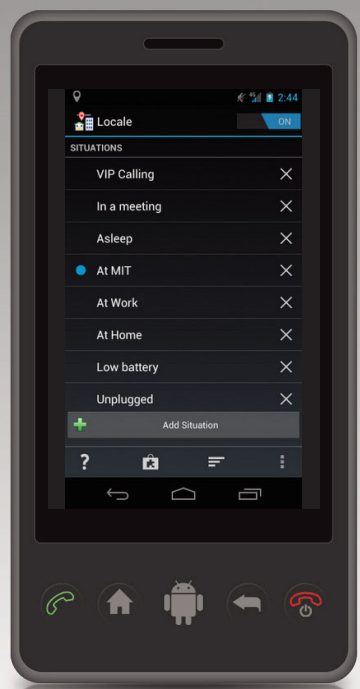


SignMyPad

Android

If you're looking for a quick and easy way to sign PDFs from your tablet or Android phone without wasting paper and time, then try SignMyPad ($3.99). This app lets you open a PDF file, sign it, save it, and forward it without having to print it out. The app now supports the use of a magnetic stylus for more precise control. Features include the ability to open PDFs from email messages or your current Dropbox account, an intuitive user interface that makes signing documents easy, and support for adding text notations. Users can also utilize the Save As function to create multiple drafts of a document.

App Of The Month



Locale

Android

If you find yourself regularly silencing your phone when you're at work and turning the ringer back on when at home, then Locale ($4.99) was built for you. With this app, you can designate geographic locations in which you want your phone to look and act in certain ways. For instance, drop a pin on a map where you work, drag your finger to increase the radius, and then configure the app to automatically silence your phone, change the wallpaper, and enable Wi-Fi. Create another profile for when you're home, and you'll never have to tweak settings again when moving between the two places.

A Slice Of Apple

Mac Tips & Tricks

If you're like many PC users, you have one or more Macs in your home or office. Here are some tips to help you work faster and have a little more fun on your Mac. This month we'll show you a few Finder tips and tricks.

Use Your Different Finder Views

Mac OS X provides many ways to customize your Finder window, allowing you to browse your folders and files in various ways. It can be helpful to change your Finder layout, depending on the types of files in a folder.

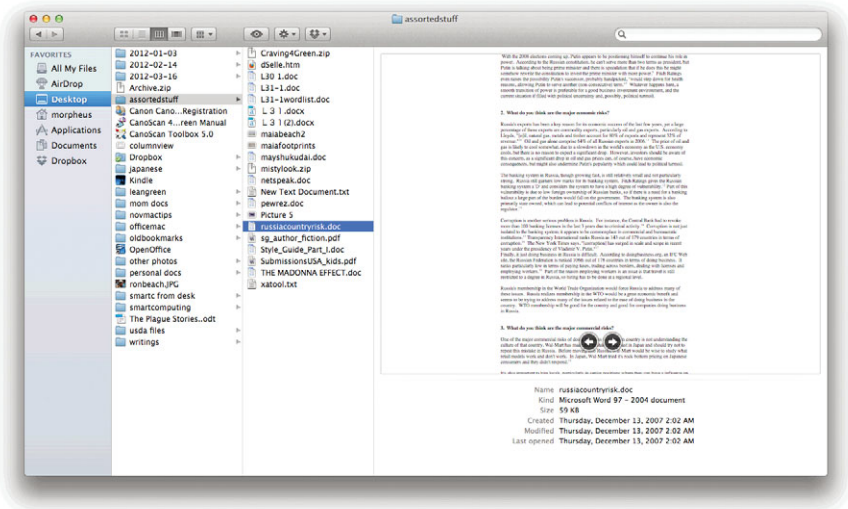
Open a Finder window. Either click on the Finder icon on your Dock or open a new Finder window from the Desktop using the keyboard shortcut Command-N.

On the Finder Toolbar to the right of the Left and Right arrows is a grouping of four icons. These icons control the view layout of the Finder window. The options are Icons, List, Columns, and Cover Flow. You're probably familiar with Icons and List views: Icons displays files and folders as icons, while List displays them as a list.

Column and Cover Flow views are very handy but tend not to be used as much. Column View is handy if you have lots of folders and subfolders you need to browse, because it will open a new column for each folder you browse, giving you a hierarchical view of your folder tree. You simply hop between columns to browse up and down the folder tree.

That's convenient, but probably the best feature of Column View is its preview feature. You can preview documents and pictures in Column View simply by selecting the file. You can even page through the document. It's a fast way to search through documents and media.

Cover Flow displays a 3-D, panable view of your folder. This view will be immediately recognizable to you if you've ever used iTunes. Using Cover Flow, you can quickly pan through your files using the trackpad



Column View also has a nice preview feature, even allowing you to page through documents.

or your mouse scroll wheel. It's ideal for browsing through a lot of images.

Use The Path Bar So You Don't Get Lost

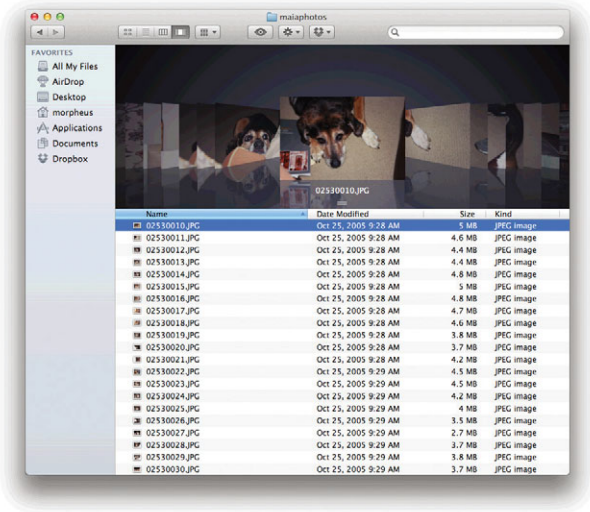
If you're browsing through a lot of folders and subfolders, it's easy to get lost. It's also easy to keep track—simply turn on your Path Bar.

With Finder open, select View from the Menu Bar and select Show Path Bar from the drop-down menu. The full path to any document or folder you've selected is now displayed on the Path Bar at the bottom of the Finder window.

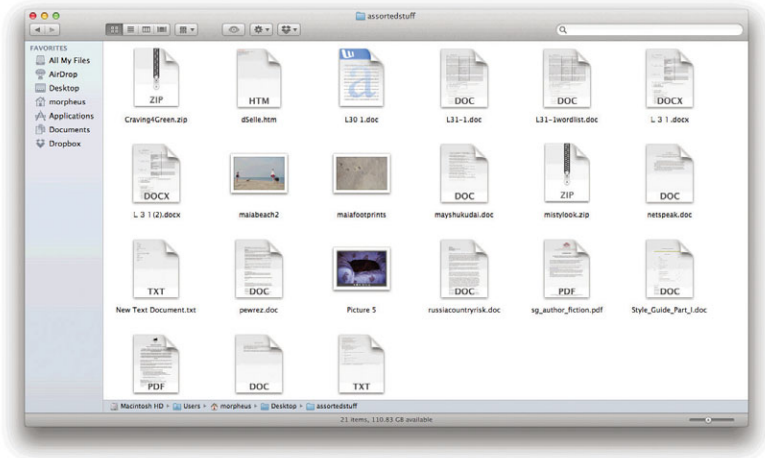
Use The Status Bar For More Information

The Status Bar is also nice to add. It gives you information about your folders and files, such as the number of items in a folder and the amount of free space on your hard drive. One nice feature of the Status Bar is the icon size slider. Simply move the slider to the left or right to decrease or increase the size of your icons.

To turn on the Status Bar, open a Finder window, select View from the Menu Bar, and select Show Status Bar from the drop-down menu. ❙



Cover Flow is great for browsing through lots of documents, especially images.



Use the Path Bar so you don't get lost in subfolders. The Status Bar has a handy slider control for increasing and decreasing the size of icons.

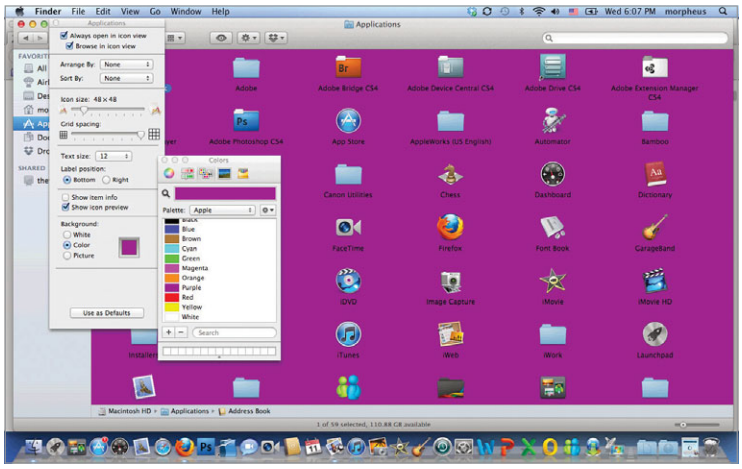
Add Color Or A Picture To Your Finder View

You can add color or a picture to the background of specific folders, allowing you to give your folder visual cues regarding their content or use. For instance, if you were working on a project on green energy, you could change the background color to green.

In Icon View (you can only do this in Icon View), select View from the Menu Bar and select Show View Options from the drop-down menu. Command-J also works. This brings up the View Options for the current folder. Under Background, select Color or Picture.

To add a color to your folder's background, select Color and then click on the white square next to the Color option, bringing up the color selection options. You can use sliders, a color wheel, or simply select from preset colors.

To add a picture, select Picture and then drag an image into the white square next to the Picture option.



Giving your folders color can help visually identify them.

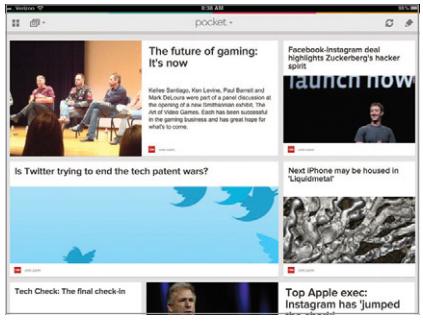
Fresh Fruit

Great Business Apps For Your iPad/iPod/iPhone

There's no shortage of impressive applications—some of them free—for Apple's popular family of mobile devices, and many of them are perfect for the home office worker or entrepreneur. Here are our favorite business-related mobile apps for the month. (Unless otherwise indicated, see the Apple App Store to purchase these apps.)

Pocket

iPad | iPod touch | iPhone

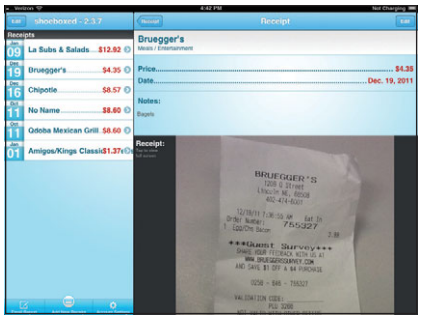


How often do you add an article's URL to your bookmarks bar because you don't have enough time to read the whole article? If your Bookmarks list is cluttered with articles that you intend to go back and read when you have time, Pocket is the app for you. The free service lets you easily send articles to its online storage area, from just about anywhere you read digital articles (Pocket works with browsers and can receive URLs via email). When you have some spare time, open Pocket and browse your list of articles. This is an app you'll be telling your friends about by lunch.

Shoeboxed

iPad | iPod touch | iPhone

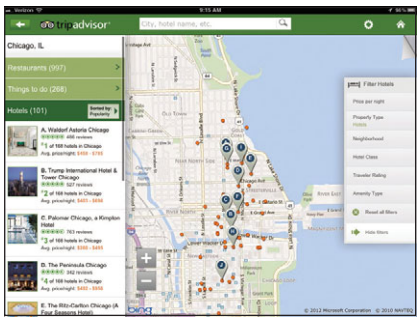
Day by day (and app by app), your smartphone is absorbing all the info that you used to keep in notebooks and scraps of paper. Your address book, calendar, to-do list, grocery list, spur-of-the-moment note, and entire documents are all sitting in your iPhone right now—and so is every receipt from your business trip, if you have Shoeboxed. Simply open the app on



your iPad or iPhone and take a picture of the receipt, and Shoeboxed does the rest. The app captures the receipt info, formats it, and has a human check it to ensure the info is correct. At that point, you can use the app to create expense reports or export them to popular accounting software formats, including CSV, FreshBooks, QuickBooks, and Quicken. After trialing the software, you can buy credits to pay for additional receipt recording.

TripAdvisor

iPad iPod touch iPhone

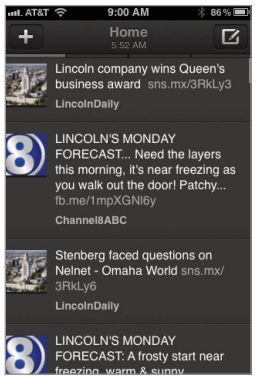


TripAdvisor has tons of information (and images, in many cases) for dining, lodging, and transportation. The service's claim to fame is its user reviews, which give you up-to-date (and very frank) takes on hotels, restaurants, and other businesses. Users also rate the businesses and often even provide their own photos to back up their praise or complaints. TripAdvisor is available as a free app and is also a website (www.tripadvisor.com). The Near Me Now button makes it easy to find establishments in your area, and handy filters help you narrow the field quickly.

TweetDeck

iPad iPod touch iPhone

TweetDeck is a free app that brings your Facebook and Twitter news feeds into one stream of posts. It's a handy tool for people who use both services regularly and don't want to check separate apps. Adding your Facebook and Twitter accounts is a snap (you can do it from within the app). You'll find that you have many of the features you would have in each service's app, including the ability to post. The app can be installed on the iPad, but is not designed for the iPad.

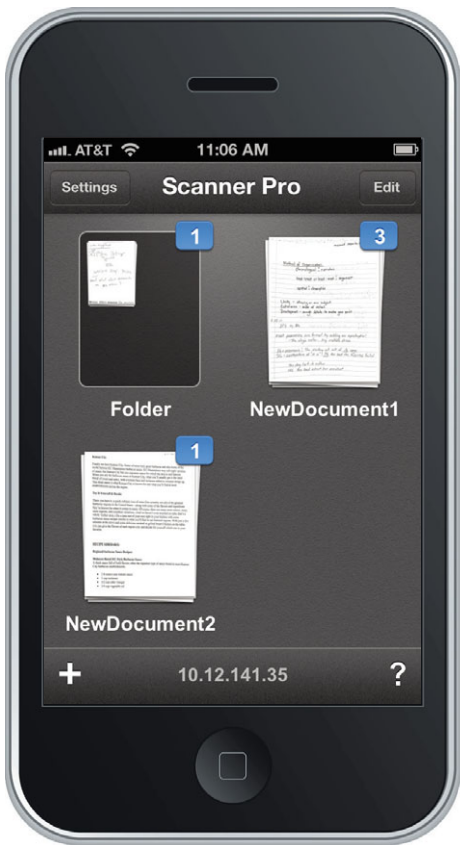


Noteworthy App Of The Month

Scanner Pro

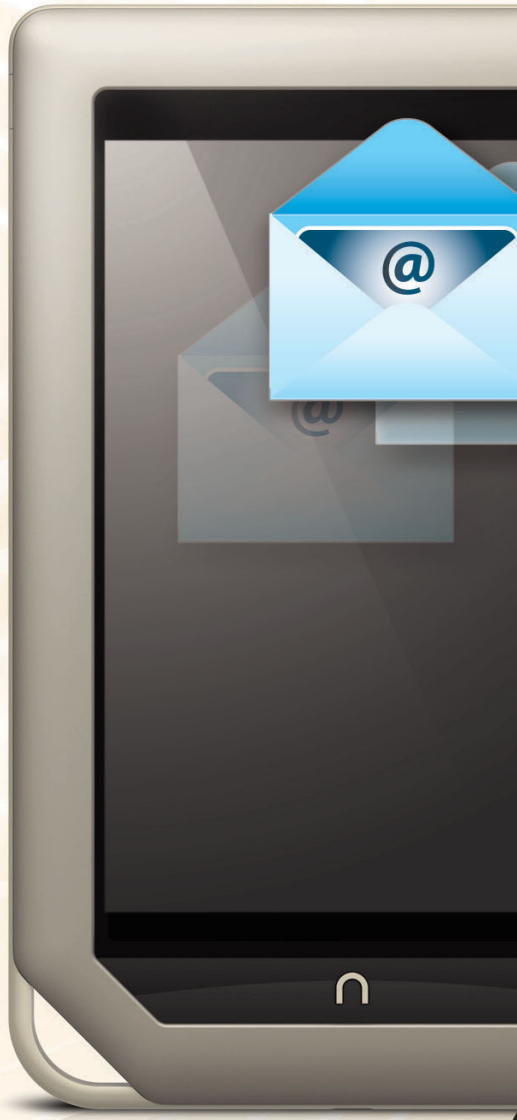
iPad iPhone

Scanners are useful tools, but let's face it: How many of us walk around with a scanner in our bag or backpack? Well, if you have an iPhone or newer iPad, you can have a scanner with you all the time. Readdle's Scanner Pro ($6.99) will never replace the flatbed scanner in your office, but it will let you use your device's camera to image, process, and export or email documents, business cards, photos, and more. Scanner Pro handles multi-page scans, auto-detects document edges, and can operate in B&W, grayscale, and color modes. Scanner Pro's not as full-featured as a sheet-fed flatbed, but it's a handy and affordable alternative.



Tablets

Tablets offer you the ultimate in mobile productivity. The slim devices are generally available in screen sizes between 7- and 10-inches, which provides you more real estate than you'd have on a smartphone. And they provide the power necessary to perform basic business tasks, such as email and word processing, so you won't need to carry a bulky laptop with you. Here, we'll cover why you'll want to consider purchasing a tablet for work.



Productivity

With a tablet, you'll have quick access to your important files and tasks. For example, most tablets send out an audio alert or on-screen notification when you receive a new email, which is much faster than using a laptop to consistently check your email. Tablet apps provide you with quick access to your most important data and files. Cloud storage services make it possible for you to use the tablet's Internet connection to remotely sync with the files you use on an office PC. In short, tablets are capable of delivering similar productivity to your laptop but in a size that you can take anywhere.

Presentations & Meetings

Many tablets also feature HDMI (High-Definition Multimedia Interface) outputs to let you conveniently connect the tablet to an HDTV or projector. Just download a mobile office suite that can play back your presentation format, and you have all you'll need to show off your products and services to potential clients. A number of new tablets provide you with front-facing cameras that allow you to use the tablet with videoconferencing software, so you can have virtually face-to-face meetings with clients or co-workers back in the office.

Entertainment

When you're not working, you can use the tablet's built-in e-reader and video playback capabilities. With the tablet's Internet connection, you'll be able to access online video streaming and Internet radio websites to enjoy a wide range of multimedia entertainment. There are also plenty of free game apps, if you prefer to play games in your downtime.

In the following pages, we'll discuss how you can use your tablet to create a video chat, connect to wireless networks, and solve common tablet problems. You can also check out our "Tablet Buyer's Guide" to learn about the highlights of a number of today's popular models.

AUG
25
AUG
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ThinkPad

Start A Video Chat On Your Tablet

Videoconferencing 101

With many of today's tablets now offering front-facing cameras, it's possible for you to use a tablet as a face-to-face videoconference tool.

In this article, we'll explain what you'll need to create a video chat and how to start one with a client or friend.

Tools Of The Trade

You'll need a tablet that has a front-facing camera, which is a camera that is located on the same side of the tablet as the screen (so that it can capture images of you while you look at the screen). You may be able to use the rear-facing camera; however, you wouldn't be able to see the person you're trying to video chat with. Next, you and the person you plan to video chat with will need to decide what videoconferencing application you will use. There are wide variety of apps for tablets that operate on the Android, iOS, and PC platforms, including Skype (free; www.skype.com) and Fring (free; www.fring.com). If you both own an Apple device—whether it is an iPhone, iPad, iPod touch, MacBook Pro, or new iMac—you can chat using FaceTime (free; www.apple.com/mac/facetime). Similarly, Android tablet users can use Google Talk to videoconference with someone who's installed Google Talk on his PC or Android-based tablet or smartphone. Besides using the same video chat program, the person you want to video chat with must also have a front-facing camera on his tablet or smartphone, or own a PC with a Web cam.

Web Connection

Some video chat apps, such as FaceTime, require you to be connected to Wi-Fi when running the application.

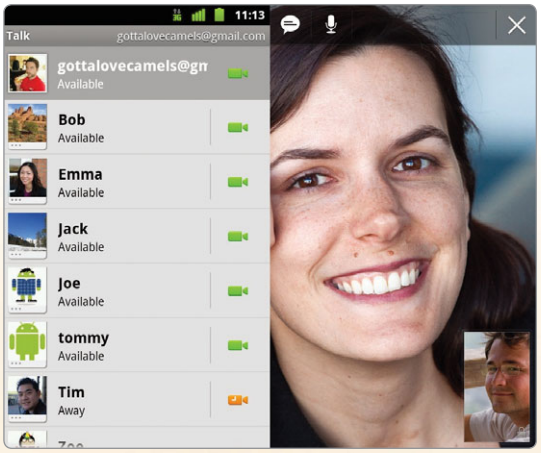
You'll need a front-facing camera, such as the 2MP (megapixel) camera on the Samsung Galaxy Tab 10.1 (starts at $499.99; www.samsung.com), to videoconference face-to-face.

Others will allow connection through a 3G or 4G cellular signal, but you'll likely get better results with Wi-Fi, because a Wi-Fi connection will generally offer a stronger signal (makes for a more reliable connection) and faster downloads (better speed makes video appear less choppy) than mobile broadband.

Create A Video Chat

Both you and the person you want to chat with will need to create an account on the service that you've decided to use. Once you've created the accounts, email or text your username to the person you want to video chat

With Skype's video chat service, you can videoconference with several people at once.



With Google Talk, you can video chat with other Android tablet and smartphone users, as well as people with Google Talk installed on their PCs.

with, and ask him for his username. After you sign in to the video chat app, go to the section of program where you can add contacts and enter the username that your friend provided you. A request will be sent to the person (to verify that he knows you), and when he accepts, you'll be able to view your contact list and see when he comes online. Alternatively, you'll receive a friend request that you can verify. Once you're both online, click the button on the app, likely listed as "video call" or "video chat," that will start your face-to-face conference.

Videoconference Tablet Tips

If you're using your tablet's front-facing camera to remotely join a business meeting, you'll want to ensure that you present a professional appearance, which may be difficult when you're working on the road.

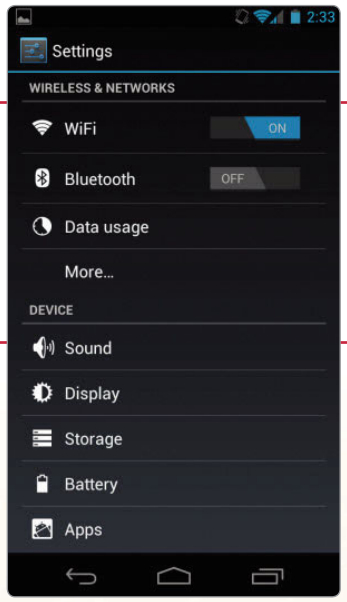
- Before you join the call, examine shot composition from your front-facing camera. In a properly framed shot, you should at least see your head and shoulders. You should also ensure that you're clearly visible.
- You'll also want to check the video quality. Web cams in tablets aren't always the best at adjusting to low light, so you may need to turn on a light or move to a location where more natural light is available. Also, avoid placing yourself in front of a window or other bright location because it may cause you to appear as a shadow in the video.
- Find a quiet area. If you're in a noisy location, such as an airport, the person on the other end may not be able to clearly hear you.

Connect Your Tablet

To A Wireless Network

The Fastest Way To The Internet

Most tablets can only connect to the Internet through Wi-Fi, so it's essential that you know how to access and change the Wi-Fi settings on your tablet.



In Android, you'll find the Wi-Fi settings under Wireless & Networks.

In this article, we'll take you step-by-step through the Wi-Fi connection process. Note that instructions for some models may vary slightly from our guidelines because of small differences among interfaces and operating systems. If in doubt, access Settings, locate a Wi-Fi or wireless networks area, and select your wireless network.

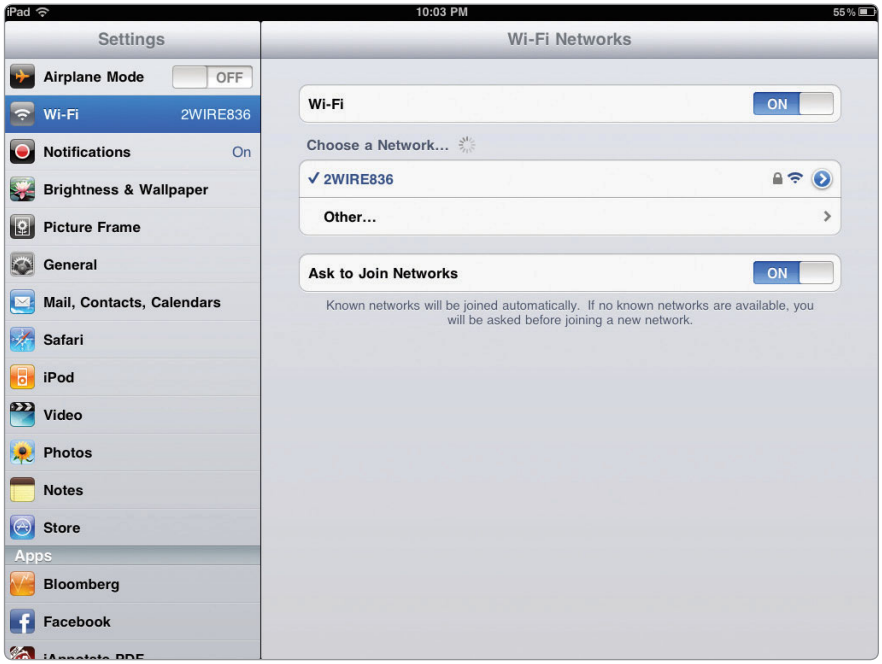
Android Tablets

To access the Wi-Fi settings on a tablet that runs Android, you can either touch the Settings icon on the Home screen or open up the App screen and select Settings. Next, touch Wireless & Networks and select Wi-Fi. If your tablet runs Android 4.0, you'll also need to slide the Wi-Fi switch to the On position. Click Wi-Fi Settings and your tablet will then scan the area for available wireless networks. If you see a lock icon next to the name, you'll need to know the security credentials to connect to it. To connect to a specific network, touch the network name, and if prompted, enter the password for the network.

You can also add a Wi-Fi network to your device's list so that it will remember the credentials and automatically connect to it when the network is in range. To do so, navigate to the Wi-Fi Settings and select Add Network. Enter the network name, sometimes referred to as the SSID (Service Set Identifier), and select Save. If you want your tablet to no longer automatically connect to a network, open the Wi-Fi Settings screen, touch the network name, and select Forget from the dialog box.

iOS

With the iPad, you can click the Settings app and select Wi-Fi. If the Wi-Fi is turned off, touch the On/Off icon to switch it to the On position. Your iPad will then scan for available networks and display them under Choose A Network. Touch the name of your preferred connection, and if it's password-protected, enter the password. You'll know if a Wi-Fi network is



On the iPad, simply access Settings and touch the Wi-Fi tab.

The BlackBerry OS makes it easy to connect to Wi-Fi.

password-protected if a padlock icon appears next to the network's name. When the iPad is connected, the Wi-Fi icon next to the network name will turn blue. In the Wi-Fi menu, you'll be able to see the signal strength of the various networks.

BlackBerry OS

If your tablet runs the BlackBerry OS, you'll be able to connect to Wi-Fi by tapping the Wi-Fi symbol in the Status bar. Then, you can tap the network you want to connect to and enter the security password, if necessary. Once you've enter the authentication info, touch the Connect button.

What Can You Do With A Wi-Fi Connection?

Most tablets include access to a number of Web services, including webmail clients, video-streaming services, and online storage apps. With the Wi-Fi connection to the Internet, here's just a small sample of what you'll be able to do with your tablet.

- Send and receive email
- Browse the Web
- Receive news and weather updates
- Locate nearby attractions
- Upload and download documents, work files, and images
- Stream movies and music
- Download new apps

Tablet Trouble

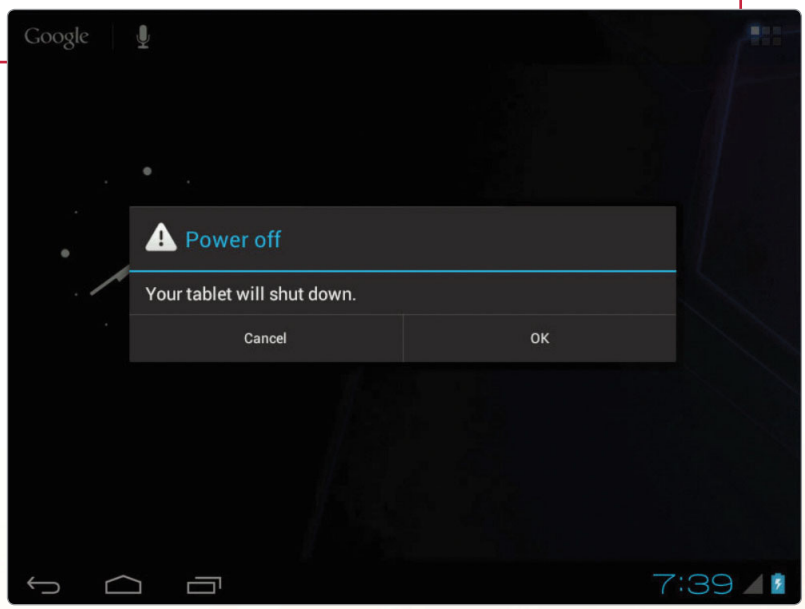
Solve Common Problems

If you're experiencing problems with your tablet, this is the article for you.

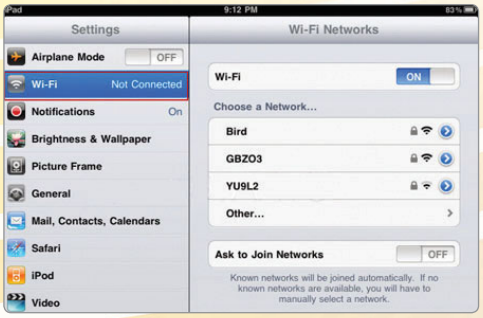
Here, we'll examine a few common problems and provide you with solutions to help you resolve the issues.

Sluggish Tablet

Despite the size differences, tablets are essentially small computers. And like PCs, they will occasionally suffer from issues caused by poor memory management, system errors, and file corruption. The easiest way to resolve performance problems is to reboot the tablet. Note that this is different than simply pressing the Power button and putting the tablet into a sleep mode. With an Android-based tablet, you'll typically need to hold the Power button until the Shutdown menu appears. Select Power Off, and once shut down, press the Power button to restart the tablet. iPad owners can hold the Sleep/Wake button until a red slider appears that you can slide to turn off the iPad. If all else fails, open the back panel and remove the battery.



Try rebooting your tablet when it seems slow.



The list of available Wi-Fi networks will indicate the quality of the signal strength.

Unresponsive Apps

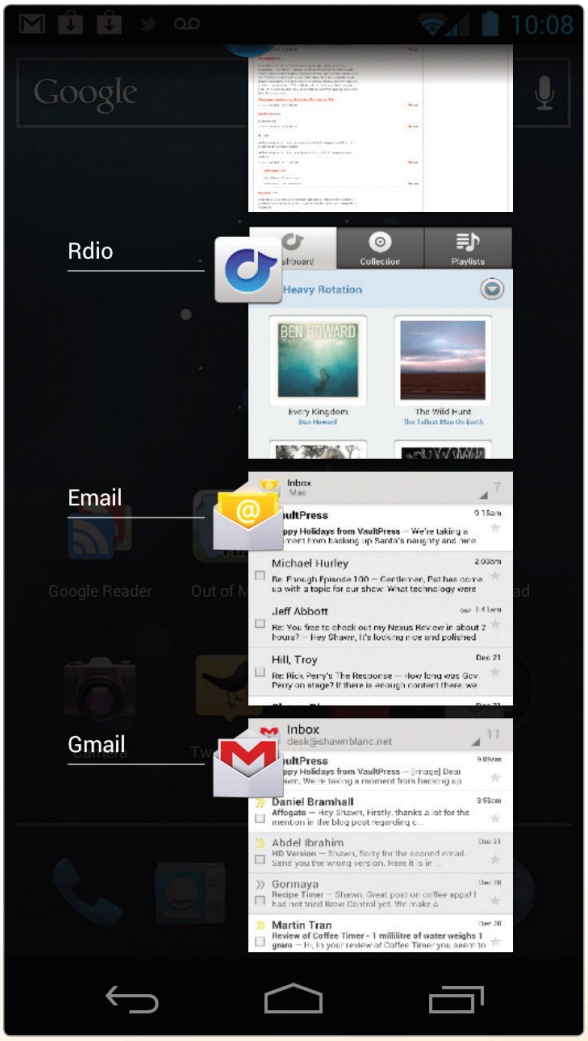
Tablet apps can lock up, just like the programs on your PC. To force a frozen application to quit on an iPad, hold down the Sleep/Wake button until the red slider appears. Then, hold down the Home button for six to 10 seconds. Open apps should be forced to quit, and the iPad should bring you back to the Home screen. With an Android-based tablet that operates version 3.2 or below, you can tap the Menu button, select Settings, choose Applications, and tap Manage Applications. Under the Running tab, you'll see a list of the open apps on your tablet. Select the one you wish to close and touch the Force Stop button. If your tablet runs Android 4.0, you'll be able to close an app by bringing up the multitasking pane and swiping the app to the left or right.

Wi-Fi Dropouts

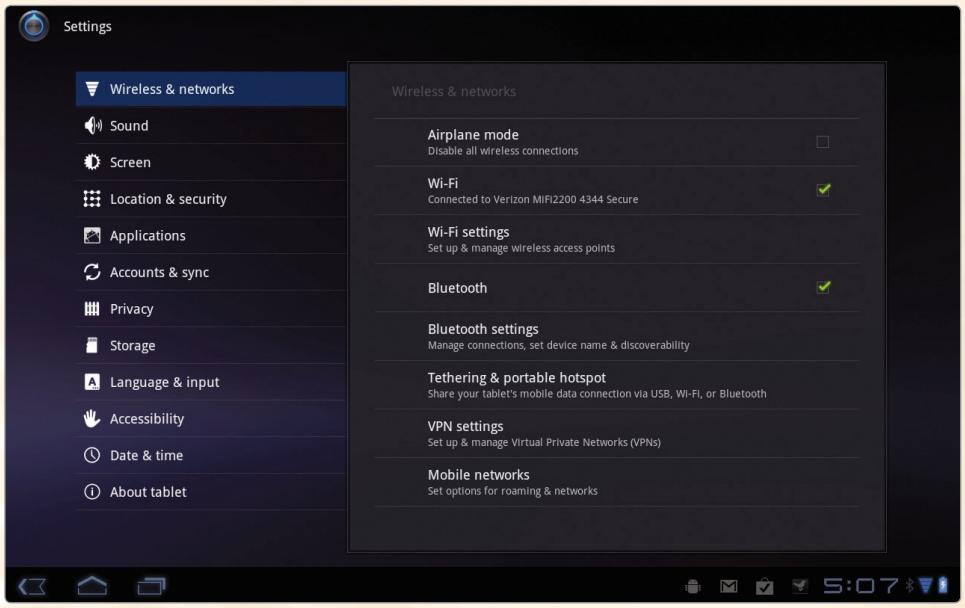
If Wi-Fi dropouts only occur in one room or one location in the room, you may need to use the tablet somewhere else. The quality of your Wi-Fi signal can be affected by a number of different things. First off, you may be experiencing interference with a neighbor's Wi-Fi signal, which typically uses the 2.4GHz frequency. Other devices that cause interference include cordless phones, baby monitors, and Bluetooth devices. An entire room may be included in a dropout area, depending on the walls. Problematic materials include brick, metal, solid stone, and mirrors. Fortunately, tablets are portable devices, so you'll only really need to find another place to use it where the signal is stronger.

Less Battery Life Than Expected

Many of today's tablets provide wireless connectivity for Wi-Fi, Bluetooth, and GPS. When the wireless connections are constantly left on, your tablet will more quickly use up its battery. When you're not using a wireless technology, it's a wise idea to turn off the feature via the Settings area of your tablet. You'll be able to quickly turn it on again when you need it. Another common battery hog for tablets is the brightness level of your screen. Sure, it's nice to be able to clearly see the screen in bright outdoor environments, but in normal lighting, the tablet probably won't need to operate at the highest brightness level. You can access the tablet's Settings to set your brightness level, and we'll note that many new tablets feature automatic brightness controls (by using the camera to analyze the room lighting), so you won't have to adjust it.



With a tablet running Android 4.0, you'll be able to close apps by pressing the app and swiping it off the screen.



To save battery life, turn off your Wi-Fi, Bluetooth, and GPS when not in use.

Tablets | Buyer's Guide

$349.99
us.acer.com

Acer Iconia Tab A200-10G16U

The A200-10G16U features a 10.1-inch screen and NVIDIA's Tegra dual-core mobile processor. You'll also enjoy the multitasking prowess of 1GB of built-in memory. In terms of storage, this tablet features 16GB of built-in flash memory, and there's a MicroSD slot that can support cards up to 32GB. The A200-10G16U will operate Android's 4.0 by the time you read this.

acer

Tablets | Buyer's Guide

$199
www.amazon.com

Amazon Kindle Fire

The 7-inch Kindle Fire provides you with access to Amazon's extensive catalog of ebooks, digital magazines, movies, and music. And with Amazon's Whispersync technology, you'll be able to sync your library, bookmarks, notes, and last pages read across multiple devices. The Kindle Fire also features connectivity and editing capabilities with your email and documents, including Microsoft Word and PDF content.

amazon.com
and you're done.™

Tablets | Buyer's Guide

Starts at $269.99
store.archos.com

Archos 80 G9

This 8-inch tablet runs Android 4.0 and is certified by Google for full access to Google Play (Google's media store). The 80 G9's OMAP (Open Multimedia Application Platform) smart multi-core processor provides you with a H.264 code to deliver videos in 1080p video quality. Archos installs Picsel Smart Office, so you can read and edit Microsoft Word, Excel, and PowerPoint files on your tablet. Connectivity options include USB 2.0, mini USB, MicroSD, and micro HDMI.

ARCHOS
Entertainment your way

Tablets | Buyer's Guide

$499
usa.asus.com

Asus Eee Pad Transformer Prime TF201 32GB

With the Eee Pad Transformer Prime, you'll benefit from the newest mobile technology (an NVIDIA Tegra 3 quad-core processor and 32GB of flash storage) and software (Android 4.0 with Adobe Flash support). Asus also provides you with an 8MP (megapixel) rear camera with autofocus and LED (light-emitting diode) flash to provide crisp image and video capture. The 10.1-inch display delivers a resolution of 1,280 x 800.

ASUS®
Rock Solid · Heart Touching

$249
www.barnesandnoble.com

Barnes & Noble NOOK Tablet 16GB

The NOOK Tablet combines common tablet features, such as a Web browser and email, with access to the 2.5 million books and magazines from the Barnes & Noble online store. Netflix, Hulu Plus, and Pandora apps are preinstalled, and you can also download apps from the NOOK Apps store. The NOOK Tablet features a battery life of 11.5 hours of reading or nine hours when watching video.

nook by Barnes & Noble

$499
www.lenovo.com

Lenovo ThinkPad Tablet 16GB with Wi-Fi

The ThinkPad Tablet can be used with the ThinkPad Digitizer Pen (sold separately) to let you convert handwriting into digital text. It will run Android 4.0 (in May 2012), which provides a voice input for dictating text and a new and improved Web browser. There's a 2MP front-facing camera for video chats and 5MP rear camera that can record at 720p video quality.

lenovo. FOR THOSE WHO DO.

$249.99
www.samsung.com

Samsung Galaxy Tab 2 7.0

The Galaxy Tab 2 is Samsung's newest 7-inch tablet, and it operates Android 4.0 for a fast and intuitive experience. You'll be able to easily share multimedia content with co-workers and customers thanks to Samsung AllShare. The app streams movies, music, and images from your tablet to any Smart TV or computer.

SAMSUNG

$399.99
us.toshiba.com

Toshiba Thrive 16GB

Toshiba's 10-inch Thrive features NVIDIA's Tegra 2 mobile processor that delivers hardware-accelerated Flash videos and HD video quality. The Thrive also offers an adaptive display technology that will automatically raise and lower the brightness and contrast of the screen to suit lighting conditions. Plenty of connectivity is provided through the USB 2.0, mini-USB, and SD (Secure Digital) card ports, and an HDMI (High-Definition Multimedia Interface) port lets you easily connect the Thrive to an HDTV.

TOSHIBA Leading Innovation >>>

Laser Printers

In the world of printers, inkjet and laser printers are your primary options for handling all the color and monochrome prints, copies, scans, and more in your home or office. This month, we're focusing on laser printers, which excel at printing medium-to-high volumes very quickly and at an attractive cost-per-page. Lasers are perfect whether you're looking for a printer to satisfy the high print demands of a small group or one capable of supporting a larger group of users.

For those of you who already know the many benefits of a laser printer, we've included a helpful tips article. "Printer Maintenance Tips" will give you the strategies you need to minimize printer outages and keep your laser printer running solidly.

Those new to laser printers or just new to a network-capable laser printer will want to read "Connect Your Printer To A Wireless Network." In it, we'll guide you in providing the PCs and notebooks on your network with access to a wired or wireless laser printer.

There is a lot of diversity within this category, such as monochrome-only printers, color and monochrome units, MFPs (multifunction printers), and more. To help you narrow the field of potential perfect printers, we've also included a "Laser Printer Buyer's Guide." This article gives you a wide range of color and monochrome units and lists the prices and some of our favorite features, such as print speed and networking capabilities, to help you make an informed decision that will make a positive impact on your bottom line.

When problems arise (and they will), don't pull your hair out—pull out this issue and turn to "Troubleshoot Your Printer."

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MENU
ON LINE
CANCEL
POWER SAVE
READY
ATTENTION

Long Live The Laser Printer

Printer Maintenance Tips

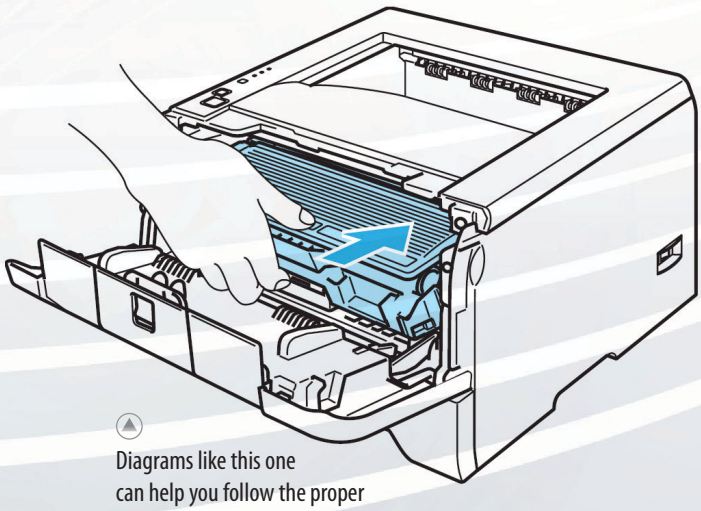
Until we finally realize the elusive dream of a paperless society, it's important to make sure your laser printer remains in tip-top shape.

Printer outages reduce your productivity, hold up legal proceedings, and ultimately affect the workflows of everyone else who depends on the unit to get business done. To prevent premature laser printer failure, perform these basic maintenance tasks occasionally to extend the life of your laser printer.

Take Care With Toner

Whenever your laser printer is due for a new toner cartridge, make sure you replace the cartridge exactly as described in the printer's manual. If you don't have the printer's manual, find one online; one wrong move and you could end up spilling toner all over the printer's important moving parts.

If you're not sure how to replace your toner cartridges, consult the manual before you begin.



Diagrams like this one can help you follow the proper procedure for maintaining your laser printer.

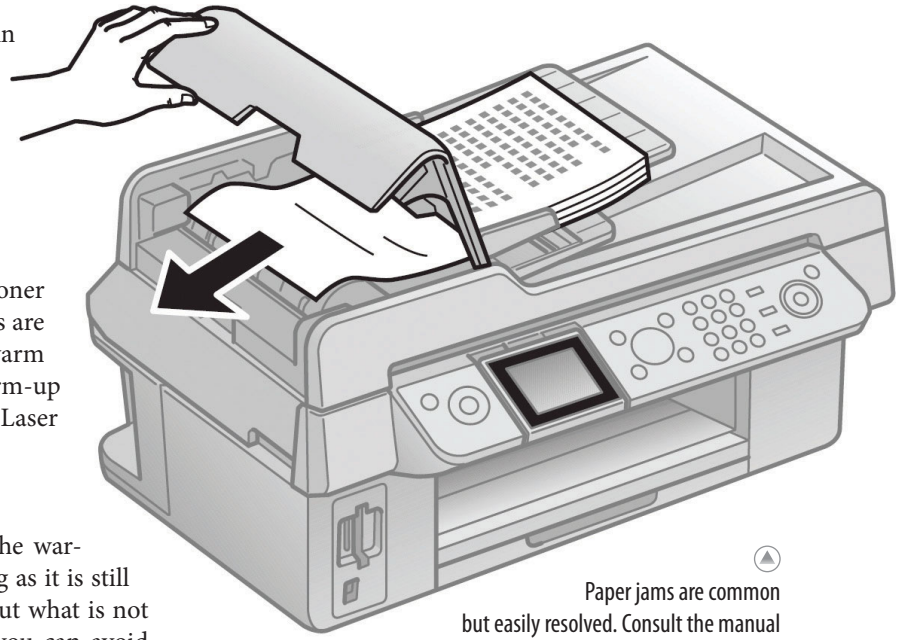
Don't Skimp On Consumables

Although bargain-bin toner and printer paper can be enticing, there is something to be said for using the toner and printer paper recommended for your device, sticking to the brand and weight when possible. Plugging in a shoddy toner cartridge could lead to a pricy problem down the road, and toner likely won't adhere as well to the wrong printer paper, which will produce less-than-desirable results. Poor printer paper could also cause paper jams and expensive maintenance calls.

Don't Push Your Printer

Most laser printers come with maximum and recommended duty cycles. For instance, the Brother HL-3075CW (see the "Laser Printer Buyer's Guide") digital color printer has a maximum monthly duty cycle of 25,000 pages and a recommended duty cycle of 300 to 1,500 pages per month. Although the laser printer can probably

sustain the maximum output volume in short bursts, consistently running the printer above the recommended volumes will reduce print quality, incur more frequent and costly maintenance, and ultimately shorten the printer's life.



Paper jams are common but easily resolved. Consult the manual for tips on how to remove the jammed paper.

Control The Environment

Laser printers use heat to adhere the toner ink to the page. As a result, laser printers are temperature sensitive. An exceedingly warm or cold room can affect the printer's warm-up period and also lead to other problems. Laser printers are also sensitive to humidity.

Be Warranty Aware

It's a good idea to regularly peruse the warranty terms for your laser printer as long as it is still covered. Note especially the section about what is not covered under the warranty and what you can avoid doing that may void the warranty. Some of these things include any damage resulting from improper installation, incorrect use, failure to keep up on regular maintenance, and use of expired consumables or accessories.

Don't DIY

It can be tempting to ignore the line in the manual that calls for a certified technician to perform some repairs or maintenance or in-depth maintenance tasks, but don't. Trying to perform these tasks or repairs yourself could lead to more costly repairs or even personal injury.

Keep It Clean

Every time you replace the toner, take a moment to inspect the unit, remove the paper trays, wipe it down with a clean, dry cloth, gently brush off toner that has collected on internal components, inspect the moving parts, and see that everything is in working order. If anything appears out of sorts, consult your manual or a certified technician. ▌

The Brother HL-3075CW has a recommended monthly duty cycle of between 300 and 1,500 pages.

Keep an eye on the temperature and humidity, as extremes on either end of the spectrum can adversely affect your laser printer.

Printer Networking

Connect Your Printer To A Wireless Network

It's a good idea to choose a laser printer with built-in wireless networking, but even printers with wired networking can process print jobs from PCs on a wireless network.

Before you can enjoy easy access to loads of high-quality prints, however, you need to connect the printer to the network. It's easy to do, and this article will give you some tips on how to cut out the fuss and make it happen.

The HP TopShot LaserJet Pro M275 supports wired and wireless networking, as well as AirPrint, which lets you print wirelessly from iPads, iPods, and iPhones.

Step One

If you have a printer with built-in (or added-on) wireless networking, then you'll want to install and set up the printer in a location that is easy to access for everyone who needs to pick up prints. You'll also want to make sure the printer's location gets a decent wireless signal.

If your laser printer only supports wired networking, then you're a little more limited in where you install and set up the device. You'll want to put it near the wireless router, access point, or gateway because you'll need to run an Ethernet cable between the printer and the networking device.

Step Two

Find your laser printer's documentation and read about how to connect your printer to your wired or wireless network. This article offers some generic tips, but you should follow the setup guide that came with your device first as it may offer additional tips or rearrange the order of some steps included here. If you don't have access to a physical copy of the manual, check the printer manufacturer's website.

Step Three

If you're installing a printer with wired networking, skip to step four. Many wireless printers that can be installed independently of a router or direct PC connection often have a built-in wireless networking wizard that you can access from the printer's menu. Find the LCD screen and press a button marked Menu or Setup; a wrench icon is also a common menu key indicator. Navigate the menu options looking for any that deal with connecting to a Wi-Fi network or setting up a wireless connection. Using the printer's menu navigation controls and number pad/keypad, you should be able to launch the setup process and perform the necessary steps to detect existing Wi-Fi networks, input passcodes, and connect your printer.

This printer features a Wi-Fi setup wizard to walk you through the configuration process.

Connect a wired laser printer to one of the spare ports (yellow) on the back of your router, access point, or gateway.

Another way to connect a wireless printer is to choose one computer on the wireless network that you can set up first and then proceed to install the printer driver software on that computer. Like the printer manuals described above, the printer driver software will vary depending on your printer model and may ask you to perform additional steps or perform the steps in a different order. Follow those instructions to the letter.

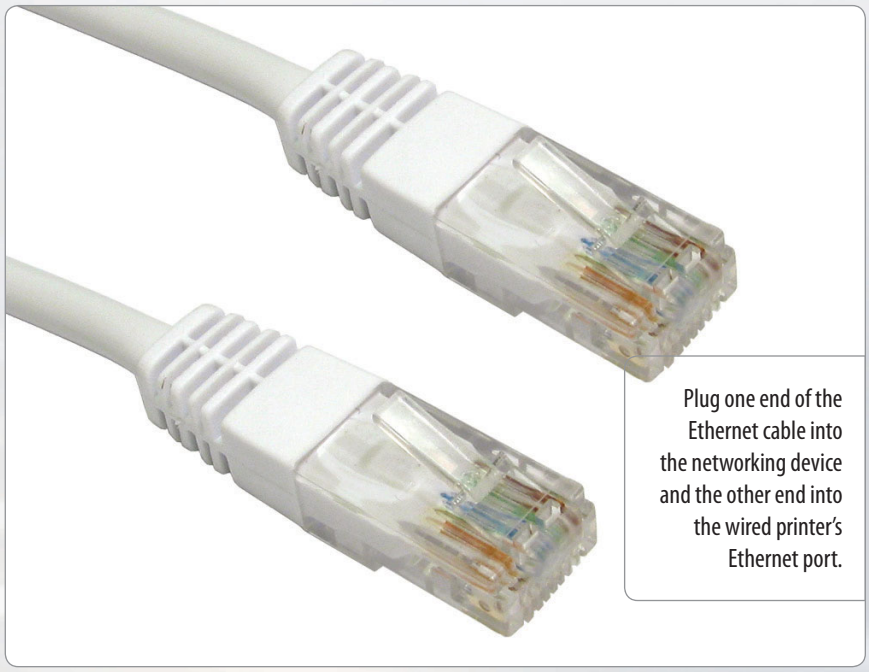
Step Four

With your wired laser printer up and running near your networking device, the next step is to connect one end of an Ethernet cable to the RJ45 port on the back of the printer and the other end to one of the available ports on the back of the router, access point, or gateway.

Step Five

As above, you will need to first configure the connection with a computer connected to the wireless network or directly wired to the router, access point, or gateway.

Install the wired printer's driver software and follow the instructions. If no driver software is necessary or included with your printer, click Start, Devices And Printers, and then Add A Printer. Select the option to Add A Network, Wireless, Or Bluetooth Printer. On the following screen, highlight your printer and then click Next to complete the setup process.



Plug one end of the Ethernet cable into the networking device and the other end into the wired printer's Ethernet port.

Get Your Printer Back On Track

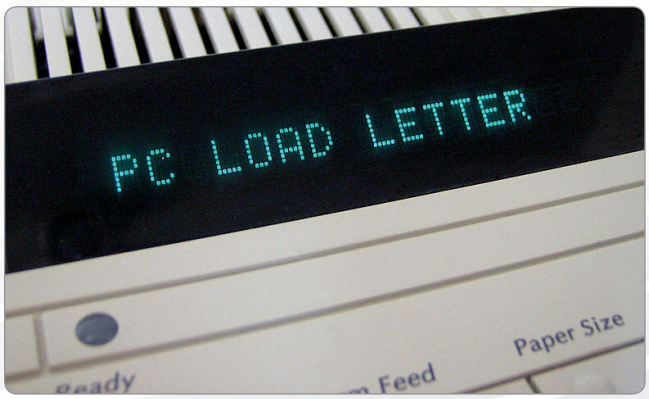
Troubleshoot Your Printer

Generally speaking, laser printers are some of the most reliable devices connected to your network.

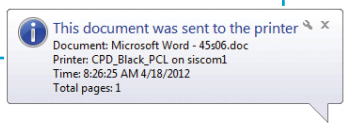
When something goes wrong, however, productivity suffers and work comes to a screeching halt. To get your laser printer up and running again, try these troubleshooting tips.

Check The LCD

Most printers feature some sort of display. It's a good idea to always check the LCD if you run into any problems while trying to print something. Often you'll find errors and messages displayed here that give you specific instructions for how to solve the issue. Some common LCD messages include Drum Error (remove and replace the drum), Jam (paper jam), and Toner Error (remove and replace the toner cartridge).



For the most part, the printer's LCD screen is a good place to start when you encounter problems.



If you see this message but the print operation still fails, then the problem is not likely with the PC or printer driver.

The Printer Fails To Print

Start by making sure the unit has power and is turned on. Allow enough time to pass to account for the warm-up period (if your laser printer requires one). If the printer is new, make sure any packing material, tape, and protective plastic has been removed from the unit. Check that the drum and toner cartridge are in their proper places and the compartments that provide access to the inner part of the printer are closed. Make sure there's plenty of printer paper in the tray(s).

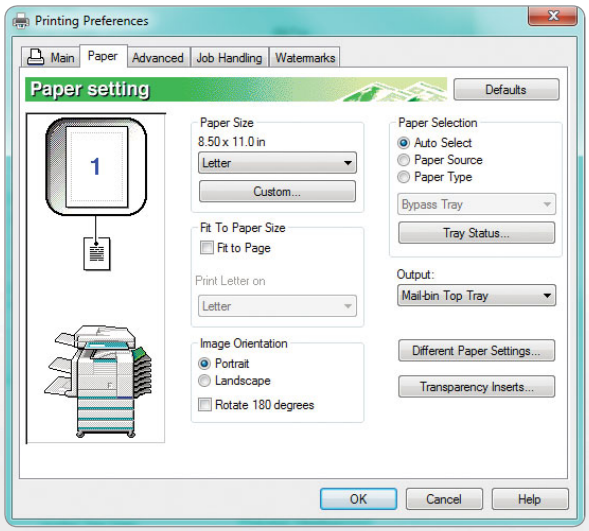
If the printer is connected via USB or Ethernet, make sure the cable spanning the two devices is secure. If the printer is connected wirelessly, make sure it can detect the wireless network and that the printer and PCs on the network can communicate.

If your printer supports it, it might help to try an alternate connection method. For instance, connect a Wi-Fi-connected printer with a USB cable and then retry the print operation.

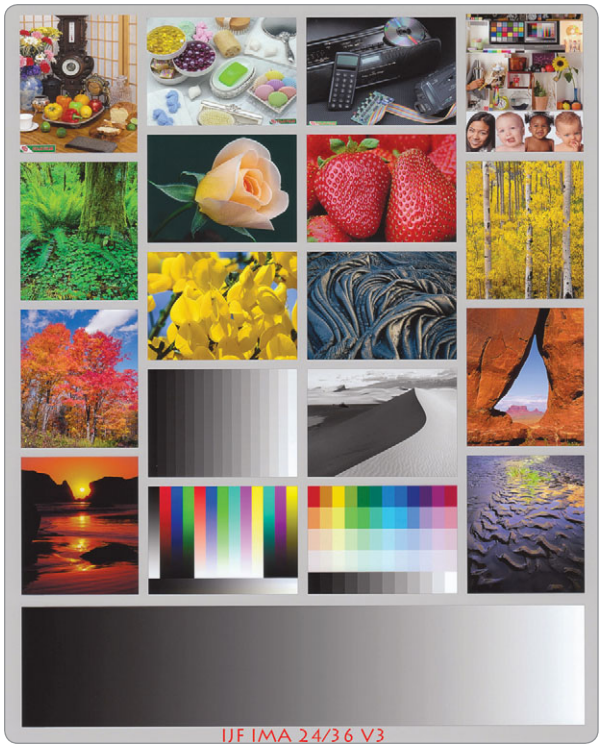
Printer Makes Crunching, Grinding, Or Tearing Sound

This sound is most commonly associated with a paper jam. Often the printer will stop running to allow you to remove the jammed paper, but if it doesn't, power off the printer and unplug it. Open the paper tray and remove it completely from the printer. Inspect

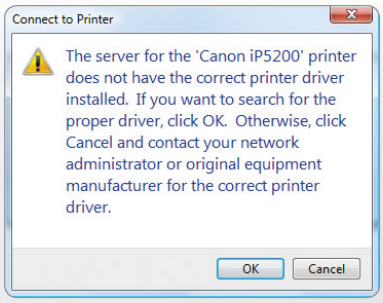
Many laser printers indicate the location of paper jams on the LCD screen.



If print quality is suffering, check your printer settings to make sure you've selected the proper paper type.



Printing a test page like this one is a great way to pinpoint your printer's color, alignment, or grayscale reproduction problems.



If you see a message like this, then the problem lies with the currently installed driver.

it for jammed paper. Parts of the printer may be very hot, so use caution and open the top, back, and front covers (if present) and inspect those areas for jammed paper. When you're confident that the paper has been removed, replace the paper tray, close the covers, plug the printer in, and then turn it on.

Poor Print Quality

If the printer begins to produce prints with banding and blank lines, then you may need to replace the drum unit. If the printer produces faded images or dim colors, then first make sure a toner-saving mode has not been enabled. Next make sure the paper you're using matches the type selected in the printer driver. Gently shaking the toner cartridges can also help improve image quality. Although the LCD will likely indicate when the toner cartridge is empty, you may resolve this problem by replacing the toner cartridges with new ones.

Poor image quality may also be the result of a dirty drum or LED or laser heads. Consult the manual for your laser printer to determine the best way to safely clean these components. High humidity can also affect how well the toner adheres to the paper, so make sure temperature and humidity are not excessive.

$299.99
www.brother-usa.com

Brother HL-3075CW

Brother's affordable digital color printer has built-in 802.11b/g wireless networking for easily connecting it to your other office PCs. We're also impressed with the 19ppm color and monochrome output performance, which puts the HL-3075CW in a league all its own. Other features we like include a USB Direct Interface for printing directly from a thumb drive and the adjustable 250-sheet-capacity paper tray and single-sheet manual feed slot.

$599.99
www.brother-usa.com

Brother HL-4570CDWT

The Brother HL-4570CDWT is ideally suited to organizations that demand a little more from their color laser. It features duplex (two-sided printing) and dual paper trays capable of holding up to 750 sheets and a multipurpose tray that can store 50 more. This printer operates at up to 30ppm in color and monochrome, supports wireless networking, and gives users the option of using high-yield toner cartridges to reduce the overall cost per page.

$379.99
www.dell.com

Dell 1355cn Multifunction Color Printer

Organizations that require medium-duty monochrome, occasional color laser, and the added convenience of copy, scan, and fax should consider the Dell 1355cn. This printer features a drum and fuser unit designed to last as long as the printer itself, onboard wired networking, 15ppm monochrome and 12ppm color performance, a four-line LCD display, 150-page paper tray, and the option of selecting 1,400-page color and 2,000-page monochrome high-yield toner cartridges.

$349
www.hp.com

HP TopShot LaserJet Pro M275

As you'd expect from an MFP, HP's TopShot LaserJet Pro M275 lets you print, copy, and scan. The printer features an impressive 17ppm monochrome print speed and a 4ppm color print speed for the occasions when color is necessary. The TopShot Scanning capability lets you scan images of 3D objects. We also like the HP ePrint feature, which lets you print from virtually anywhere.

Laser Printers | Buyer's Guide

$1,599
www.lexmark.com

Lexmark C792de

The C792de is a laser printer capable of duplex printing in your choice of monochrome or color. Features we like include the intuitive 4.3-inch color touchscreen menu, the ability to upgrade paper tray capacity to up to 3,200 sheets, the brief 8-second monochrome and 8.5-second color warm-up period, and the 50ppm print speed for color and monochrome. A4 color print performance is also an impressive 47ppm.

LEXMARK™

Laser Printers | Buyer's Guide

$499.99
www.okidata.com

Okidata C530dn Digital Color Laser Printer

This color laser printer from Okidata is ideal for small workgroups that require unparalleled color image quality. Print speeds are up to 31ppm for monochrome prints and up to 27ppm for color prints. Features include HD Color printing technology that produces sharp results, duplexing, Ethernet networking, and support for printing banners up to 52 inches long.

OKI®

Laser Printers | Buyer's Guide

$185.99
www.samsung.com

Samsung ML-2955ND

Samsung's compact and attractive ML-2955N laser printer is the single-function monochrome workhorse you've been looking for. This unit supports duplex printing, high-yield 2,500-sheet toner cartridges, 29ppm performance, and a handy one-touch ECO Mode button, which forces duplex, N-up printing (shrinking pages to fit two or more to a printed page), and a toner-saving mode to reduce costs.

SAMSUNG

Laser Printers | Buyer's Guide

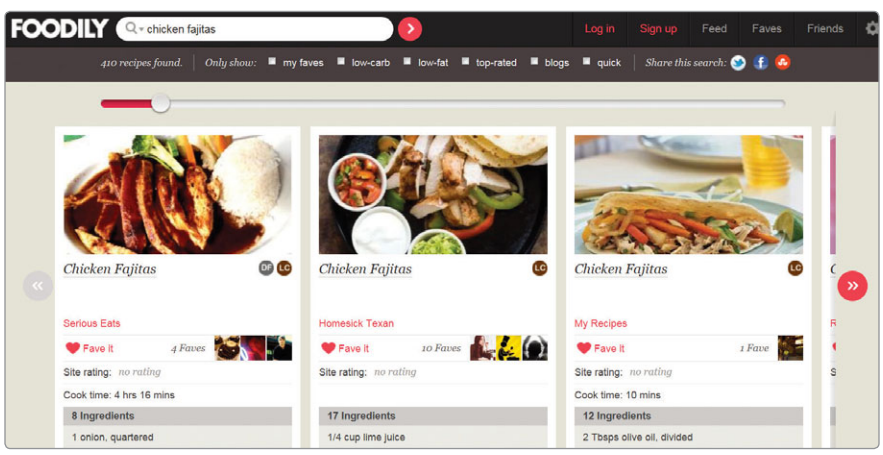
$399
www.office.xerox.com

Xerox Phaser 6500/N

The Phaser 6500/N is a dependable single-function color printer that is capable of producing color and monochrome prints at up to 24ppm after a short 12-second wait for monochrome and 13 seconds for color. The paper tray has a 250-sheet capacity and a maximum duty cycle of 40,000 images per month. Other features we like include built-in Gigabit Ethernet networking and the ability to add additional memory to extend the unit's life.

XEROX®

Find It Online



Foodily
www.foodily.com

Foodily combines a recipe site with social networking. Rather than simply searching a food site to find the meals you love, Foodily aims to help you find new ways to discover recipes and share them with your friends. You can search for recipes from numerous online resources, including cooking sites, recipe search engines, and popular chefs. You can filter certain criteria to define your search, such as searching for foods that are low-carb or low-fat, or ones that don't contain specific ingredients. The site has a slick interface that lets you scroll through results and compare recipes side by side. If you find a recipe that interests you, simply click it to go to the original source and see ingredients and preparation instructions. Foodily integrates with Facebook so you can share your Faves with friends and see which recipes they enjoy.

HomeSpot
www.homespothq.com

HomeSpot is a free service that helps you manage information about your home, including maintenance and repairs information, reminders, paint colors, appliance purchases, home improvement projects, and more. HomeSpot aims to save you time and money by helping you record all of your home info in one place. To get started, simply create an account, add your home information, and start a maintenance to-do list. You can even set up email notifications that will remind you of upcoming projects and tasks. In addition to helping you save time and money, HomeSpot can help you save on your taxes, prepare your home to be sold, or go green with environmentally friendly tips for your living space.

WhatWasThere
www.whatwasthere.com

WhatWasThere is a project that wants to "put history in its place," essentially letting users travel in a virtual time machine to visit familiar places and see what they once were. This site combines Google Maps with historical photos of streets, buildings, and locations to see how they appeared in the past compared to how they look now. Enter a city, state, or country to see photos already in the site's database. A map shows you how many photos have been uploaded for that location and nearby areas. Click the photo to see more details and compare it to a current Google Street View. If you have photos of your own that you'd like to contribute, simply click Upload A Photo on the main page. (You'll need to register for a free account before you upload any photos.)

Daily Challenge
www.dailychallenge.com

Do something good today—for yourself or for others. Need a little help in deciding what to do? Take the Daily Challenge. This site promotes a social well-being program that challenges its users to do one positive action each day. Sign-up is free, and the site will email you

a challenge every morning. This could be something as simple as trying a new vegetable or offering a compliment to another person. Once you complete the challenge, you can mark it as "Done" right within the email. You can also share your experience with friends and family or read about how other users accomplished the task.

TaskRabbit

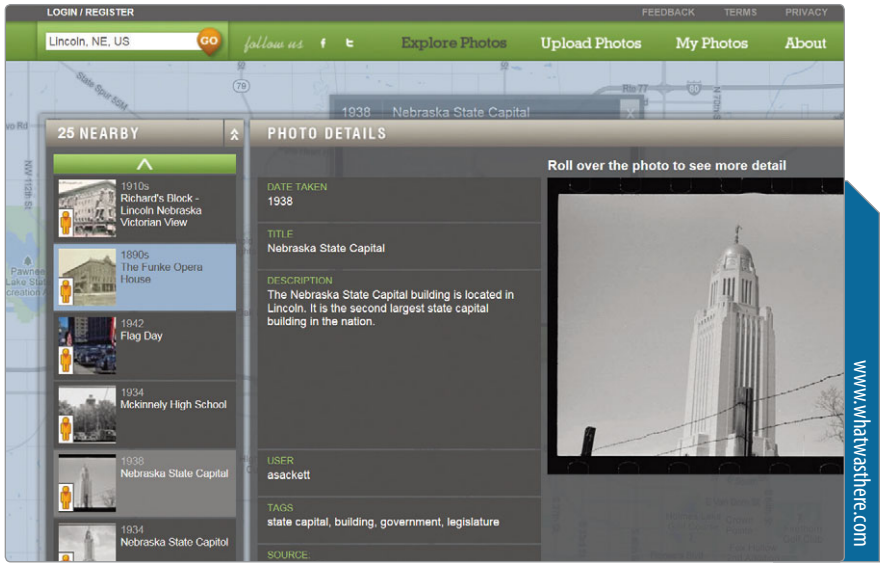
www.taskrabbit.com

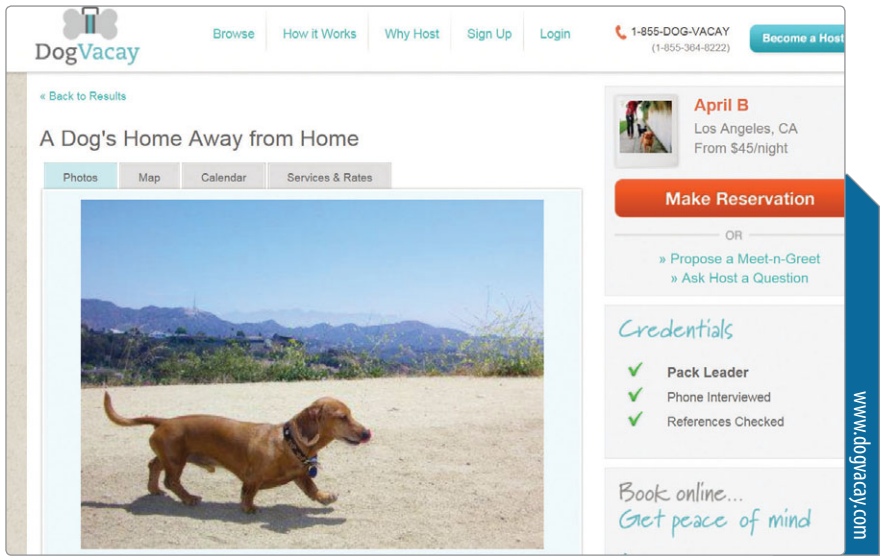
TaskRabbit is a service that connects you with reliable people who can help you cross items off your to-do list. To become a "TaskRabbit" (the person offering help or services), each person must complete an application, perform a background check, and submit a video interview. If you're looking for help, simply fill out a Task form and name the maximum price you are willing to pay. The TaskRabbit in your area who makes the minimum bid will automatically be assigned your task. Users pay online with a small percentage going to the service and the majority going to the TaskRabbit who completed the task. TaskRabbits can help with anything from grocery shopping to handyman work.

Dog Vacay

dogvacay.com

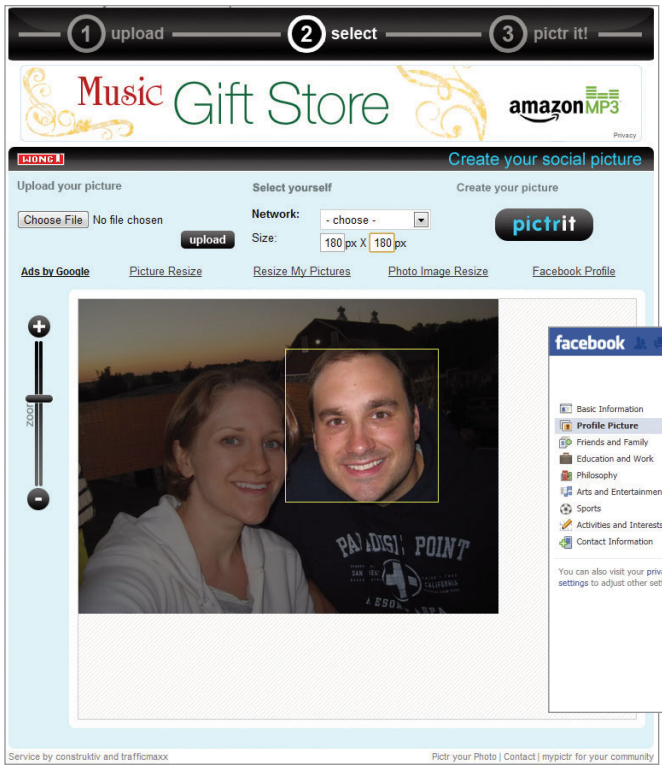
While you are on vacation, Fido should get to have a little fun, too. Rather than locking your pet in a cage at a kennel, Dog Vacay's mission is to provide a positive experience for pets and their owners by offering several options for home boarding, in which dogs receive individual attention and supervision from other responsible pet owners. You can browse hundreds of host profiles to find the perfect host and book your dog's boarding online in just a few clicks. Dog Vacay also provides insurance coverage and emergency support for your dog, photo updates that can be sent via email or MMS (multimedia message service), and customer support. And, if you are not fully satisfied with your dog's stay, Dog Vacay backs its service with a 100% money-back guarantee. ▌



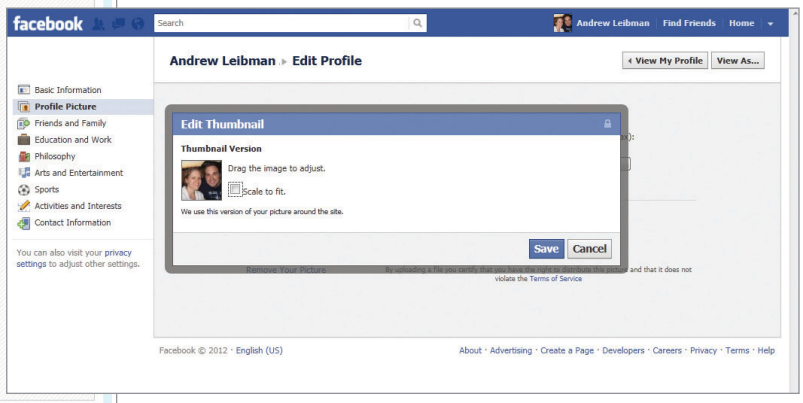


Create A Profile Picture

Make Your Social Network Profile Your Own



Google+ gives you a surprising amount of flexibility when it comes to editing your profile pictures.



Click Edit Thumbnail in Facebook to adjust the image slightly.

The tiny square image that accompanies every Facebook status update, tweet, and social network post you submit represents you in the digital world. That's why it's important to get your profile picture right. Read on to learn how to replace that unflattering shot of your right nostril and cheek with an image that looks exactly how you want it to.

Resolution Matters

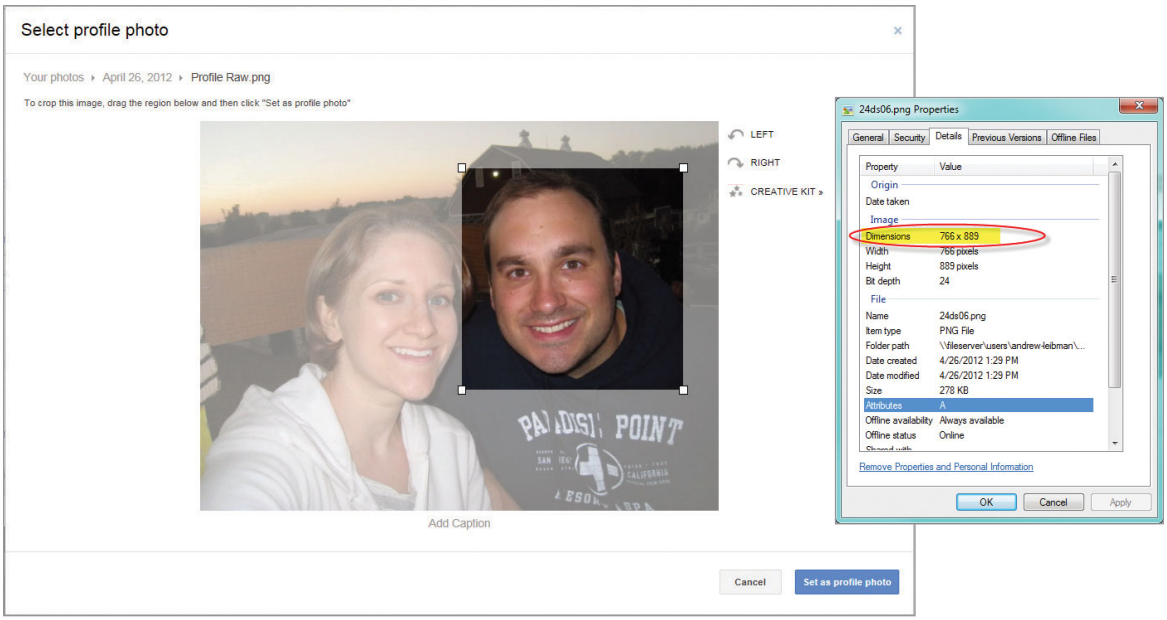
The key to making amazing profile photos is image size. Almost every social networking site has different resolution requirements, so the key is to find those out first. (To see the minimum resolutions for some popular social networks, see the sidebar below.) Most photos you upload will have much higher resolutions than those minimums, however, so when you upload a high resolution image for your profile picture, just know that it will be shrunk and cropped to a roughly square shape.

Upload & See

Some photo upload tools give you more freedom than others, so we recommend finding a photo of yourself and uploading it to the social networking site of your choice. Facebook lets you click and drag any photo that was cropped to center it more appropriately. Twitter offers very little image manipulation. Google+ probably has the best profile picture manipulating tools, so there's little extra work you need to do before uploading.

The Software Solution

Photo-editing software such as Microsoft Paint (included in Windows XP/Vista/7) lets you easily resize and crop photos to the appropriate dimen-



Mypictr.com lets you easily resize and crop images to use as profile pictures on virtually any social network.

Rick-click an image file, click Properties, and then click the Details tab to view its dimensions.

sions. Click Start, All Programs, Accessories, and then click the Paint icon. Click the tab to the left of the Home tab, click Open, select the profile photo you want to edit, and then click Open. You can select a portion of the image and use the Crop tool to center and square your face (the current dimensions of the cropped area will appear at the bottom of the screen). The Resize feature is good for making a high resolution image small enough to meet a social networking site's size restraints.

The Web Way

One of our favorite ways to create profile images is using Mypictr.com. We recommend using Google Chrome as your browser for this site. Launch Chrome and navigate to mypictr.com. Next, click Browse, navigate to the image you want to use, click Open, and then click Upload. You can click and drag the yellow box, use the zoom controls on the left side of the page, use the drop-down menu to select preset social network profile picture dimensions, or input your own dimensions. If you use the dimensions from the sidebar in this article, you should have a perfect profile picture in no time. ❙

Minimum Image Resolution For Popular Social Networks

To make sure your potential profile pictures meet the minimum requirements, click Start, click Pictures or navigate to the folder where your profile picture is located, and then hover the mouse pointer over the photo for a few seconds to display the photo's metadata, including its dimensions. Below are the minimum image dimensions for a handful of social networks.

Facebook

Profile pictures for Facebook must be at least 180 x 180 pixels square. Images must also be 4MB or smaller to upload.

Twitter

Twitter's profile minimum image resolution is 73 x 73 pixels. Twitter only allows profile picture uploads that are 700KB or smaller, which means you'll probably have to shrink photos you take with a digital camera.

Google+

Your Google+ profile image will be resized to a 202 x 192 pixel image. Google+ doesn't have a file size limitation, but if the images you upload are larger than 2,048 x 2,048 pixels, then they will be resized to fall at or below that limit.

Ovation

Each month, the *Smart Computing* staff gets to work with all kinds of new computing and consumer electronics products. Here are some of the most exciting products to cross our desks.

HD Pro Webcam C920

$99.99 | Logitech | www.logitech.com

This webcam's claim to fame is HD 1080p video. It can record videos in 1080p or deliver 1080p video calling via Skype, the well-known video chat service. It offers 720p video calling on many instant message services, such as Logitech Vid HD and Windows Live Messenger. The camera's H.264 encoding makes it ideal for shooting video to upload to Facebook, Twitter, or YouTube. Other noteworthy features include Carl Zeiss optics, a quality autofocus, and dual stereo mics. Thanks to its collapsible clip, you can prop the Pro Webcam C920 on your desktop monitor, attach it to your laptop screen, or even secure it to a tripod.

Wireless Mobile Mouse 4000

$34.95 | Microsoft | www.microsoft.com

As handy as laptop trackpads are, many of us still find a mouse to be the easiest way to navigate Windows. If you're looking for one to tuck into your laptop bag, check out the brightly colored Mobile Mouse 4000. The mouse is small but makes room for a groove for your thumb and a 4-way scroll wheel, as well as four customizable buttons. Microsoft's BlueTrack Technology means that the mouse tracks on most surfaces, including particularly rough or smooth surfaces. The transceiver is small enough that you can leave it plugged into your laptop's USB port when you pack up your laptop for a trip. The Wireless Mobile Mouse 4000 includes a single AA battery and boasts a 10-month battery life.

Ovation: new computing and consumer electronics products

EXTREME Foldable Active Noise Canceling Headphones (XNC230)

$109.99 | Able Planet | www.ableplanet.com

Able Planet's EXTREME headphones are geared toward travelers, students, and music lovers alike. The XNC230 features a collapsible compact design for easy storage and transportation. For music enthusiasts, the headphones offer high-quality sound thanks to award-winning patented LINX AUDIO technology, which creates high-frequency harmonics to enhance sound quality and clarity for all levels of hearing. Able Planet also includes active noise cancelation technology to help reduce background sounds. For comfort, convenience, and style, the XNC230 has an adjustable headband, in-line volume control, and is available in several color choices. Included in the package are a soft carrying case, one AAA battery (to power the noise canceling feature), and a 1/4-inch adapter for use with home stereo equipment.

Wireless Touchpad

$49.99 | Logitech | www.logitech.com

The Logitech Wireless Touchpad for Windows 7 gives you freedom to roam the Web without being tethered to your desk. The 5-inch touchpad offers a fun way to navigate the Web and other documents using intuitive multi-touch fingertip control. You can point, tap, scroll, and swipe through emails, documents, photos, the Web, and more. For example, the touchpad offers one-finger pointing and cursor control, two-finger scrolling, three-finger swiping, and four-finger app switching. And best of all: There are no cords, so your desk is clutter-free. Logitech's Unifying receiver plugs into a free USB port on your computer and can go unnoticed without having to be removed. You can also add other compatible Logitech devices to pair with the single Unifying receiver. The Wireless Touchpad has a four-month battery life (two AA batteries are included) and an LED (light-emitting diode) indicator. Even if you normally prefer using a mouse over a small laptop touchpad, the large surface of Logitech's Wireless Touchpad might win you over. Give it a test drive and let your fingertips decide.

Tips From The Help Desk

Common Tech Questions

QUESTION:

How can I solve the Terminal Server Keyboard error?

A: This error message may appear on your Windows Vista computer. Its text may include: "Terminal Server Keyboard is preventing the machine from entering hibernation." It means that a program is interfering with the keyboard driver. To solve this, uninstall (and then re-install) the programs you have most recently installed. If you have recently installed Adobe Type Manager or PGP-disk, start with those, as they have been reported to sometimes be involved in this issue.

QUESTION:

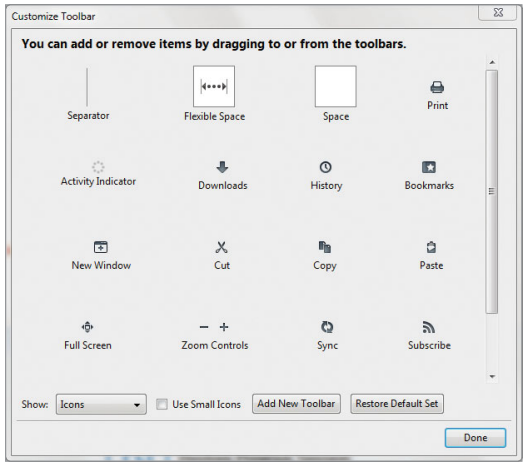
My browser lost its bookmarks bar. How do I get it back?

A: Use your Internet browser long enough, and you'll look up one day to discover that something important is missing. These days, browsers are so easy to customize that you may well customize yours without meaning to, from time to time. We'll refer to your bookmarks bar, but the instructions apply to just about any browser toolbar.

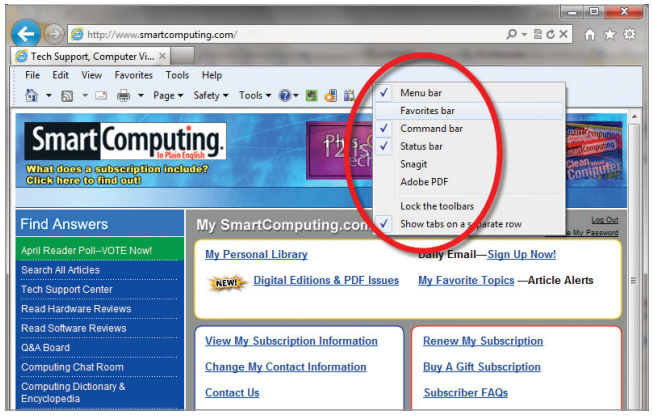
Start by determining whether the bar is really gone, or has simply moved. Browsers typically let users shuffle taskbars (such as the bookmarks bar or menu bar) to meet their needs. It's possible that you accidentally grabbed the toolbar and pulled it onto the same row as another toolbar. If you see a small portion of your toolbar, the accidental resizing that we just described is likely the cause. Click the Movement area of the bookmarks toolbar (usually the left side) and then drag it to a new row. When you release the toolbar, it should snap to the new row, displaying all of the bookmarks that it displayed before you accidentally moved it.

If you're certain that your bookmarks bar hasn't moved and is really gone, it's time to check your settings.

Chrome. It's much easier to accidentally remove the bookmarks bar in Chrome than it is to re-enable it. You removed it by right-clicking the toolbar and then clicking Always Show Bookmarks Bar. To bring back the bookmarks bar in Chrome, press CTRL-SHIFT-B. Alternatively, click Customize And Control Google Chrome (the wrench icon) and then click Tools, Always Show Bookmarks Bar.



Firefox has an excellent tool that lets you customize your toolbars. Simply choose buttons and drag them to your toolbar from this menu.



Don't worry if Internet Explorer seems to lose your Favorites bar. You can easily retrieve it.

Firefox. Re-enabling your bookmarks bar in Firefox is a snap. Right-click the top edge of the browser and click Bookmarks Toolbar. It's back and you're ready to go. On a related topic, Firefox has a great tool for managing toolbars. Right-click the top edge and click Customize to open the Customize Toolbar menu.

Internet Explorer. In Internet Explorer, right-click any toolbar. (Don't right-click a button on the toolbar.) When the context menu appears, click Favorite Bar. Your bookmarks

bar now appears at the top of Internet Explorer. You can move it to its original location.

Safari. If you lost the bookmarks bar in Safari, you likely clicked the Display A Menu Of General Safari Settings button (a gear icon) and then clicked Hide Bookmarks Bar. To bring it back, simply click the gear icon again and click Show Bookmarks Bar.

QUESTION:

I received an email that tells me my security software (it mentioned my software's brand name) needs to be updated. It asks me to open an attached file to update Norton. I haven't opened the attachment. Is it a scam?

A: Yes. You were smart not to open the attachment: It almost certainly contains malware. Delete the email immediately. Next, you'll want to run your virus scan, but you should update its virus definition lists first—the right way. Open the antivirus software and initiate an update check from within the program. In most cases, you'll see an Update button: Click it and install any updates it suggests.

You can trust your antivirus software to locate legitimate updates, but don't trust emails that purport to know that your computer is infected or that your antivirus software is out of date – even if the email appears to come from the company that publishes your software. While we're on the topic, be suspicious of seemingly official emails that ask you to enter your account number. If you think the email is legitimate, skip the link and instead open your account the way you normally would, by entering the address for the site's main page into your browser's address bar and logging in.

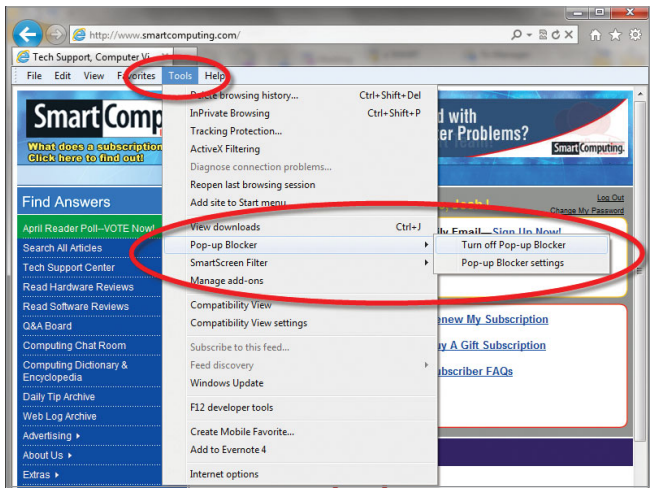
QUESTION:

A website tells me I need to disable my "popup blocker" to use a certain portion of the site. What is a popup blocker?

A: If you used computers during the '90s, you probably remember popups, which were browser windows that would open when you visited certain webpages. Visit the wrong website, and you might have found yourself closing dozens of these popup windows (which usually contained ads). These days, your browser's built-in popup blocker (or one in a toolbar you installed) prevents unwanted popup windows from opening. Sometimes, it also stops you from opening windows you'd like to open.

In many cases, when a popup blocker blocks a window, it will display a message somewhere on your browser so that you'll know what happened. It will likely also have an option for you to temporarily allow the popup window to open. If it doesn't, you'll need to disable the blocker yourself.

To disable your popup blocker, check the Options (or Settings, or Preferences) section of your browser's toolbar for a popup blocker setting. Otherwise, check your browser for the same. In Internet Explorer, for example, you can easily reach the popup blocker. Simply click Tools, Pop-Up Blocker, Turn Off Pop-Up Blocker. Repeat these steps (clicking Turn On Pop-Up Blocker at the end) to enable the blocker again (once you have opened the content you were trying to reach in the first place).



If you think your popup blocker is preventing your browser from opening a popup that you want to see, disable it—and remember to enable it when you're done.

BUYER'S GUIDE TOPICS

Each *Smart Computing* issue includes tips, reviews, and information about a variety of topics. However, each issue also has a featured group of articles about a selected topic. Below is a list of topics from the previous year. As a *Smart Computing* subscriber, you have access to all of our archived articles at www.smartcomputing.com.

June	2011	Small & Home Office Security
July	2011	PC Maintenance
August	2011	Mobile Computing
September	2011	Technology Troubleshooting Guide
October	2011	The Small Office Server
November	2011	Affordable Office Tech
December	2011	TuneUp Utilities 2012
January	2012	Upgrade Your Network
February	2012	Laptops & Security Software
March	2012	Inkjet Printers & Keyboards/Mice
April	2012	Desktops & Monitors
May	2012	Networking & Memory

Maintenance Basics

Permanently Delete Files

To delete a file in Windows, all you have to do is right-click it and click Delete. Right? Actually, no. That's the real-world equivalent of gently placing your sensitive files in a filing cabinet marked "Recycle Bin." If a cybercriminal gains access to your system, rest assured that the Recycle Bin is the first place he'll look for your sensitive data. In this article, we'll show you several ways you can permanently delete files in Windows.

Basic File Removal

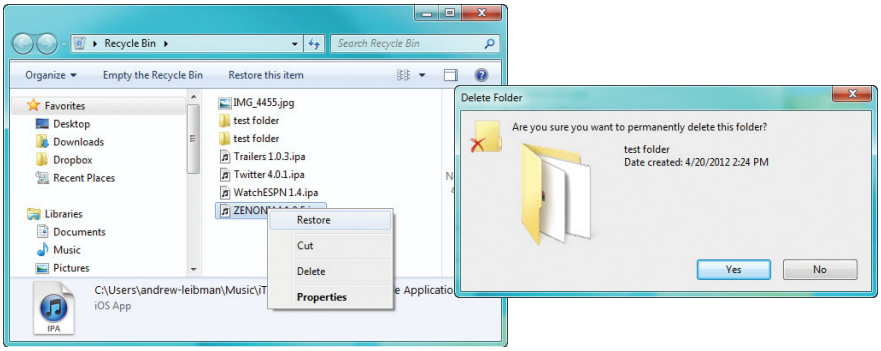
Sending a document or file to the Recycle Bin does little more than move it from its original location. All you have to do to return it is to right-click it and then click Restore or drag and drop it into a new location. As a result, the Recycle Bin is not a very effective way to delete a file.

But that doesn't mean the Recycle Bin is useless. Other than helping you declutter your folders, once files are in the Recycle Bin, you can double-click it to view them, right-click files individually and click Delete again. You can also permanently delete all files in the Recycle Bin by clicking the Empty The Recycle Bin option from the top of the window, or by right-clicking the Recycle Bin on your Desktop and clicking the same option. This permanent deletion is sufficient for most situations.

While these files can be potentially recovered, third-party software is required. When you delete something, Windows just removes the file record marker, effectively leaving it intact. If Windows needs to write data to the disk, and those sectors are overwritten, only then will it no longer be recoverable.

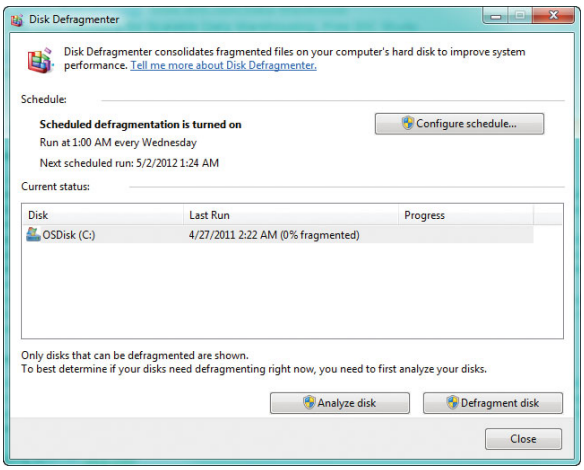
Get Serious About Security

If the files you're trying to get rid of are of a particularly sensitive nature, then Windows' definition of

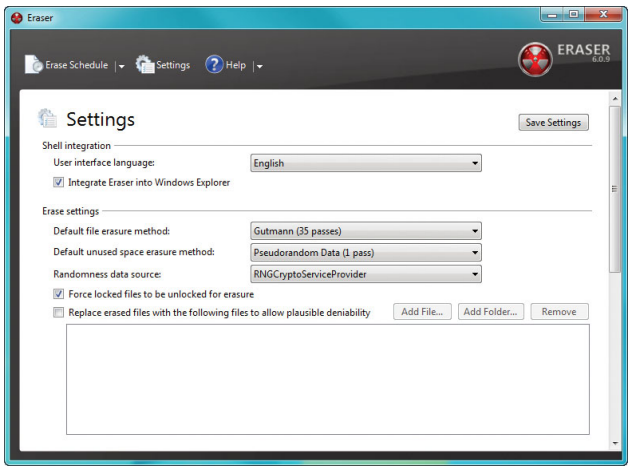


When you click Yes on this dialog box, the file is permanently deleted. Sort of.

Clicking Restore from the Recycle Bin puts the file back where it was before you initially deleted it.



Defragmenting your drive can obscure "permanently deleted" files.



Eraser is a third-party utility that can ensure a file you want to delete is not recoverable.

"permanent" may not be satisfactory. If you're using a mechanical hard drive, you can run the Disk Defragmenter to potentially rearrange the sectors that stored the sensitive data. To launch it, click Start, All Programs, Accessories, System Tools, and Disk Defragmenter. A better—though less practical—way is to simply reformat the hard drive, but keep in mind, this will wipe out anything on that drive. Launch Windows Explorer, right-click the hard drive you want to reformat, and then click Format. Make sure you perform a full format, not a quick format.

Third-Party File Pulverizers

For those rare situations where you need to make sure a file remains irrecoverable to anyone ever, you need a third-party application. Two examples are Scar5's Simple File Shredder (free; tinyurl.com/768ysso) and Eraser (free; tinyurl.com/yacgd9l), which can both erase whole hard drives or individual files and folders.

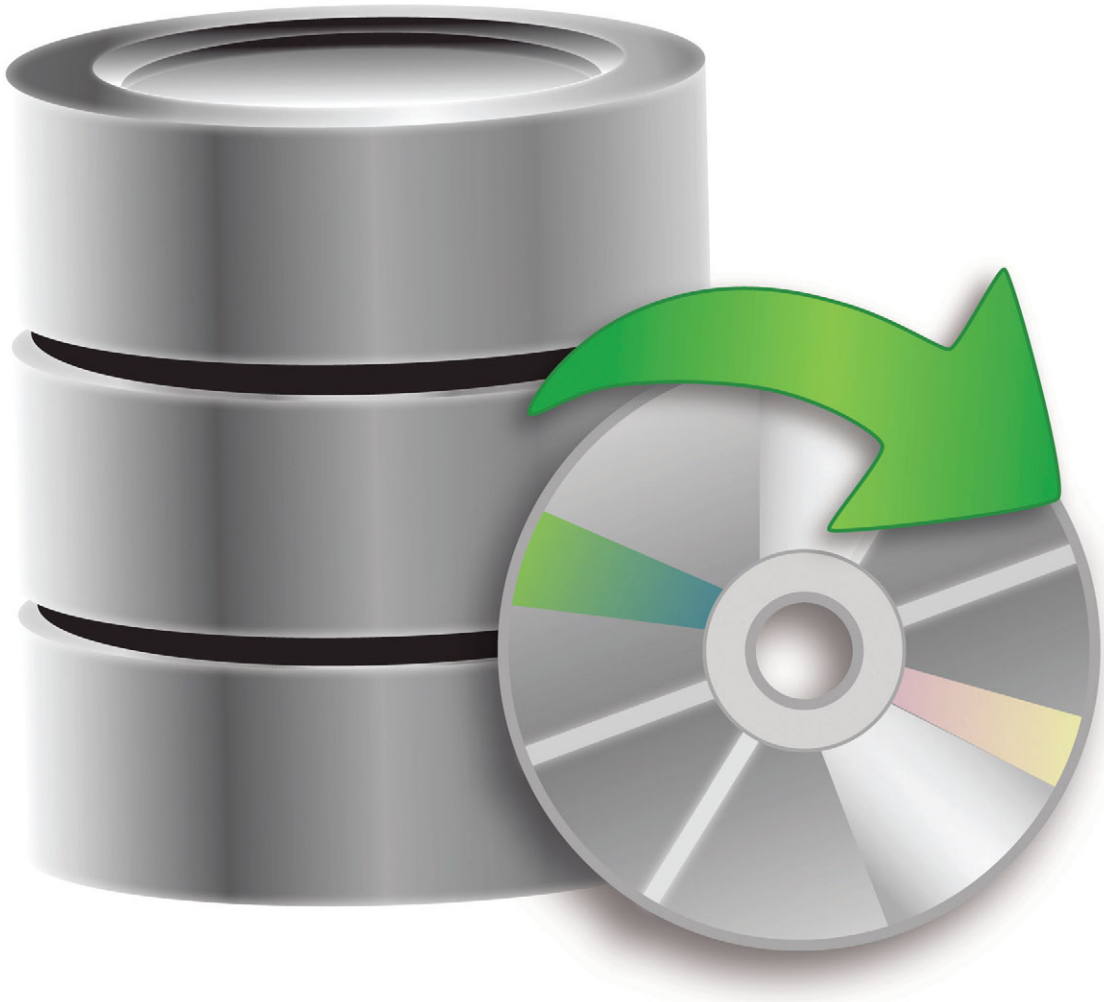
These utilities accomplish the permanent removal by overwriting the files you ask them to delete with random characters, all zeros, or other information to ensure they remain gone forever. If that's still not good enough, then look for a third-party file shredder that has been approved by the U.S. Department of Defense. One such utility is WhiteCanyon's SecureClean file shredder ($39.95; www.whitecanyon.com). ❙

Permanent Deletion Shortcut

To permanently delete a file from anywhere on your PC without first sending it to the Recycle Bin, just click the file to highlight it and then press the SHIFT key and the DELETE key simultaneously. When you see the Are You Sure You Want To Permanently Delete This File dialog box, just click Yes to continue. You can also get rid of the confirmation dialog box by right-clicking the Recycle Bin, clicking Properties, the General tab, and then clearing the Display Delete Confirmation Dialog checkbox.

Protect Your Business

Make Backup A Priority



When it comes to business, data backup is essential. Your work computers contain all types of critical information, including customer records, finances, and emails. In the event of computer crash or theft, you'll lose valuable work time recovering the data—or in a worst-case scenario, the data may never be recovered. Here, we'll examine what to consider when selecting your backup methods.

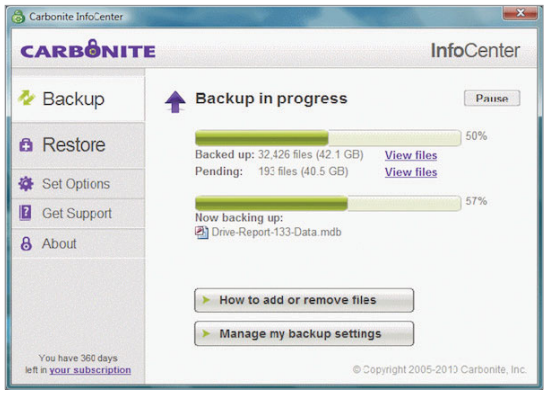
Local & Offsite

With onsite backup, you can use data recovery and backup software, such as NTI's Shadow 5 For Windows ($49.99; www.nticorp.com) to back up the key files from your PC to an external hard drive, NAS (network-attached storage) device, or a storage server. Typically, you'll want to set up your data recovery software so that it automatically transfers the critical files to your backup location on a regular basis, such as every hour or at 8 p.m. each day. Data recovery utilities let you select how often and which folders are backed up.

If you have critical files that you can't afford to lose, it's a good idea to

The Chances Of A PC Disaster

The top four causes of data loss are disk crashes, viruses, accidental deletions, and equipment loss or theft, according to David Friend, CEO of Carbonite. How likely is it that your business will lose data? According to Friend, "Approximately 10 to 15% of customers restore data from Carbonite each year, including many who need to do a full restore." With the odds about one in eight that you'll experience some sort of data loss in the near future, it's a good idea to invest in a reliable backup strategy as soon as possible.



Carbonite can continually back up your critical files, so your backup files are always up-to-date.

Carbonite's iPhone app allows you to securely access backed up files from your iPhone.

back up offsite (on a regular basis) to a cloud storage provider, such as Carbonite (www.carbonite.com). "If the building burns down, has a flood, or somebody breaks in and steals your equipment, you're hosed. Backups have to be offsite," says David Friend, CEO of Carbonite. Online backup services store your data on their secure servers, so you won't need to worry about protecting your data backups in the office. For example, in Carbonite's secure data center, Friend says, "Everything is encrypted before it leaves your PC and is stored on highly redundant arrays, and nobody gets into the data centers without an escort, even me."

Another benefit of an offsite backup is the ability to remotely access files from a smartphone or laptop. A good example is the following email that Friend provided us from a Carbonite customer: "I was standing at the train station when a client called and needed a copy of the contract urgently. It was on my computer at the office, but the computer was turned off. I thought about going back to the office, and then I remembered 'I have Carbonite.' I had never tried the iPhone app before, but in a couple of minutes, I located the contract and emailed it to the client."

What Should You Back Up?

You'll want to regularly back up any types of files that you use in the office. Just a few examples include documents, spreadsheets, email, point-of-sale files, accounting data, graphics, promotional images, video, and customer relationship management files. You may also want to back up the complete contents of a server or work PC, in case there are any files that may not be located in the folders that are typically backed up. ▮

Carbonite's Online Backup Service

Carbonite offers backup solutions designed specifically for small businesses. These services are offered for use on an unlimited number of PCs and NAS devices for one flat price, so you won't need to buy a new license for each new employee. For $229 per year (the Business plan), you'll have 250GB of storage space, while $599 per year (the Business Premier plan) will provide you with 500GB of backup storage. The Business Premier plan also supports backup from Microsoft Windows servers. All plans come with automatic file and folder backup, continual incremental backups, easy file recovery, and access to the files from any computer.

UPDATES & DRIVERS

When it comes to protecting your PC, installing the latest software updates is one of the most important steps you can take. Software updates fix bugs, plug security holes, and sometimes even add new features. Drivers can also solve problems and improve performance, but many users prefer to install new drivers only when a device isn't working properly. Here are the updates and drivers you should know about this month.

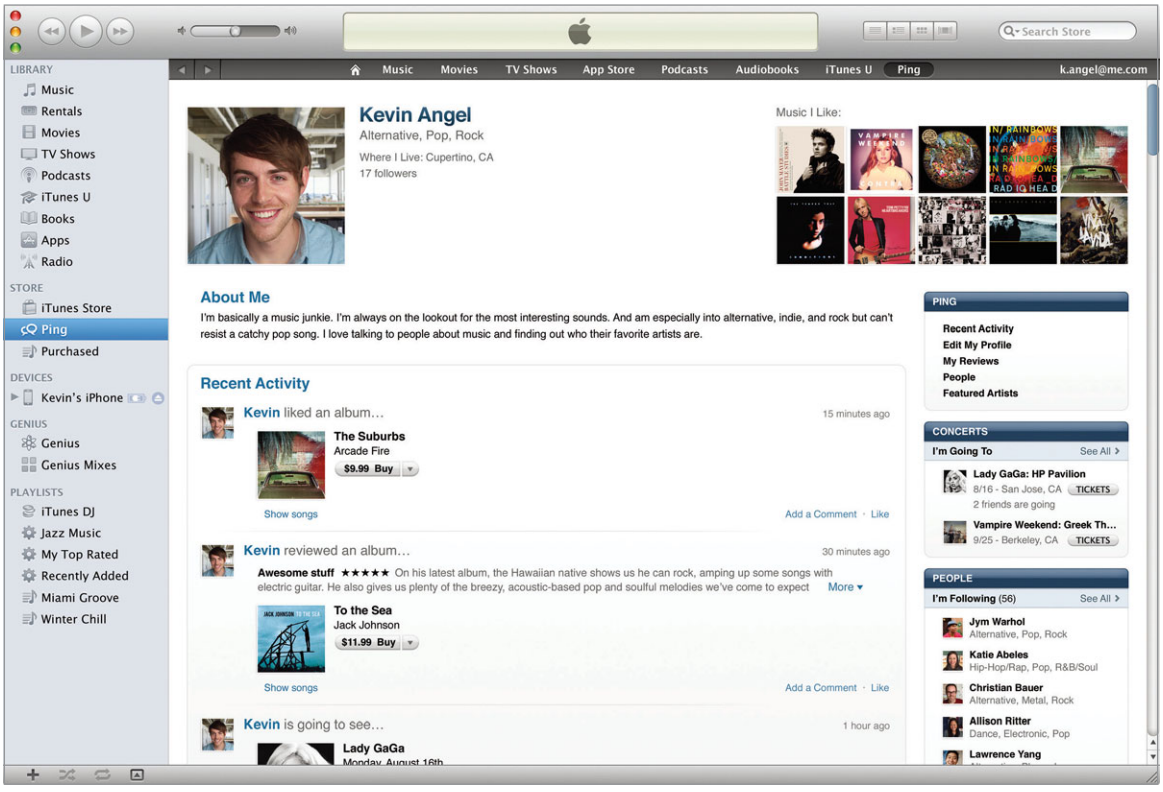


Image Courtesy of Apple

The new update to iTunes provides fixes, rather than adding new features. The update doesn't take long to install.

iTunes 10.6.1

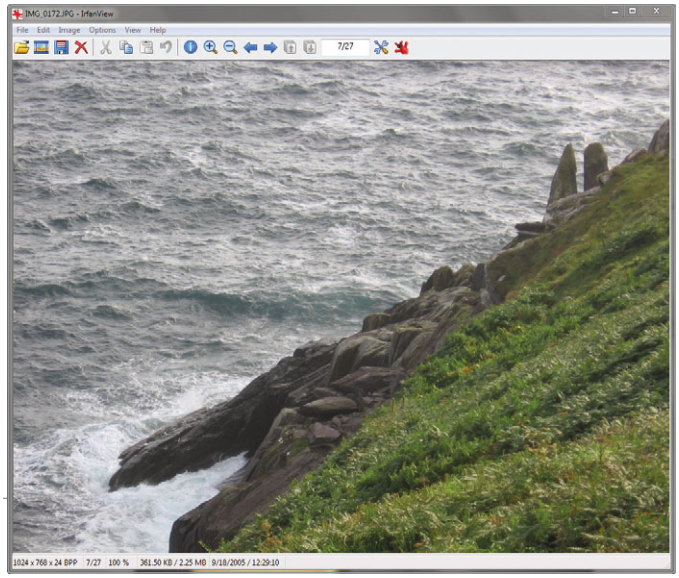
iTunes is Apple's popular media management software. The program, which is available for Macs and PCs, helps users buy, store, organize, and play audio and video files. It also lets them distribute those files to their Apple devices, such as the iPad, iPod, and iPhone. The latest version of iTunes, iTunes 10.6.1, offers some important improvements. Whether those improvements affect you depends on how you use iTunes, but we recommend updating to the most recent version, even if you feel that the improvements won't change much for you. While many people prefer to update device drivers only when something is wrong with a particular device, it's generally a good practice to keep your software up-to-date, both for functionality and security.

This update includes a fix for a problem that you might have encountered while browsing TV episodes on the iTunes library via your Apple TV, which is the set-top device that Apple sells separately. The problem affected ordering TV episodes. Another fix solves an issue that caused the iPod nano or shuffle to crash while iTunes synced with the device. Another fix solves incorrect descriptions by WindowEyes and VoiceOver. Other fixes solve problems with syncing photos to devices and changing artwork sizes in Grid view. Also, the update fixes a problem that causes iTunes to quit while playing videos. The update is available for 32- and 64-bit Windows and for Mac OS X. As always, you can download it free from www.apple.com or from within iTunes (click Help and Check For Updates).

UPDATES & DRIVERS

IrfanView 4.33

If you are a freeware enthusiast, you likely already know about IrfanView (www.irfanview.com). The free photo-viewing application supports a wide variety of image formats and has several photo-editing features, too. For example, you can crop photos, change color depth, and even add certain effects, such as blur. The latest version, 4.33, provides support for the JPEG-XR format. It also includes (thanks to version 4.32) support for adding watermarks. For a complete list of the new version's tweaks, visit the main page and click History Of Changes. To download the software, click the Download link and then choose a file hosting service from which you feel comfortable downloading the software.

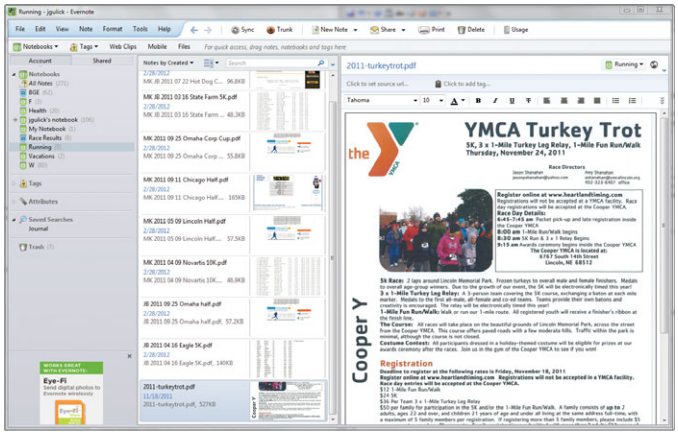


IrfanView is a free photo-viewing program that also has some basic photo-editing tools.

Evernote 4.5.4

Evernote (www.evernote.com) is a versatile note-taking tool that helps you store and organize your notes and other media online. Evernote has many great features, but one that gets a lot of attention is its excellent search capability. The service can search the text within your documents and provide results quickly, even when you are storing a large amount of data. The free version has some limits on the types of files you can upload (as well as the amount of data it will store), but it provides more than enough flexibility for users to give the software a realistic trial run. In fact, many users rely only on the free version.

Update 4.5.4 brings many new features and fixes to Evernote. Problems with bullet points have been solved, some quirks that affected PDFs have been eliminated, and notes no longer print in large fonts. A notable new feature is support for dragging attachments or images to Microsoft Office programs. The service now syncs Notebooks with all of your devices as soon as you share them (if they haven't been synced before). To update Evernote, simply click Help and Check For Updates.



Evernote lets you capture just about anything and store it all online. You can access your notes (and other files) from multiple devices, including computers, smartphones, and tablets.

Update Tip

These days, many programs have built-in tools that can check for updates. Some programs can even download and install updates automatically. An easy way to determine whether your software has these tools (and to find out whether your software is up-to-date) is to click the About button. Not all applications have such a button, of course, but generally speaking, you can expect to find an About button near the top of the main menu in a program. If your program has updating capabilities, it will likely have some info about them here. If not, it will probably still give you the program's version number, which you can then compare to the latest version listed on the publisher's website.

Quick Study

LibreOffice

An International Spell Check

LibreOffice (free; www.libreoffice.org) is an open-source productivity suite from The Document Foundation, which is an offshoot from the developers who helped create OpenOffice.org. One of the interesting features of LibreOffice's Writer (the word processing program) is the ability to spell check in multiple languages, which is a helpful asset for business users who need to repeat paragraphs or write sentences in another language. Writer supports spell check capabilities for almost 50 different languages. The built-in dictionary and thesaurus also works with multiple languages.

Spell Check

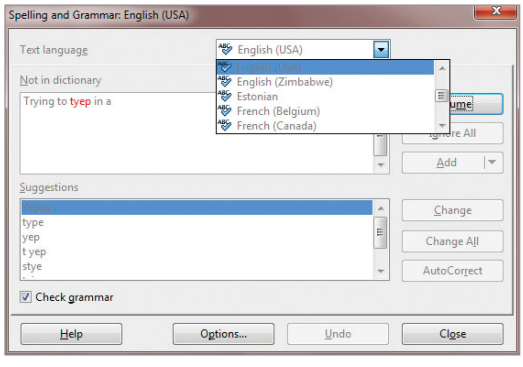
Checking the spelling of words in your document is fairly easy. Open the document you want to spell check and highlight the section of text you want LibreOffice to examine. Then, choose the Tools menu and click Spelling And Grammar. By default, LibreOffice will search the text in your default language, likely English (USA), for the text you've highlighted. To change the language, click the Text Language drop-down menu and select the option you prefer.

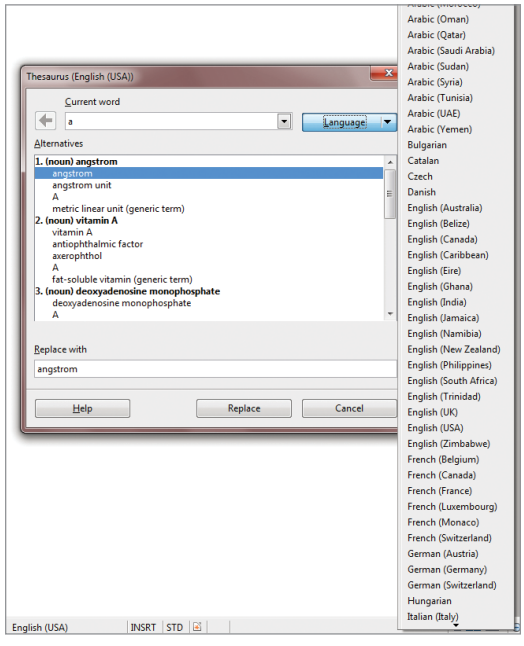
You can also configure LibreOffice to use a different dictionary for specific sections or paragraphs, so that it always spell checks in the language you prefer. To do so, highlight the text where you want to change languages, click the Tools menu and select Language. You can select either For Selection or For Paragraph, depending on the formatting of your selection. Then, choose the language you want LibreOffice to use.

LibreOffice will offer thesaurus options that match the selected language for the selection or paragraph. If you need to change the language of the thesaurus, click the Tools menu, select Language, and choose Thesaurus. Then, select the Language drop-down menu in the upper-right corner of the window and choose your language. Note that a thesaurus library isn't available for every language listed.

The thesaurus built into LibreOffice can also utilize multiple languages.

In LibreOffice, you can select from a number of languages within the spell checker.





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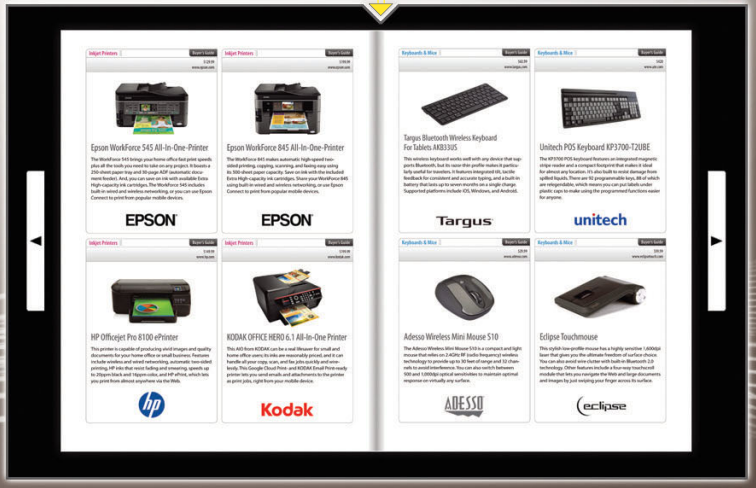

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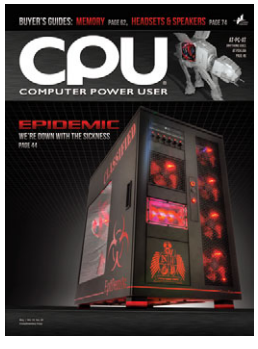

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